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Parliamentarians to meet in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — Islamic and other international parliamentary delegations will meet here next June, according to Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour who headed the Jordanian side to the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference which was held in Seoul, South Korea. Mr. Srour, in a statement to Jordan Television upon arrival, said the IPU adopted on Monday a resolution denouncing the Israeli government's plans and projects which adversely affect Jerusalem's geographic and demographic features. He added that the Jordanian team worked very hard with Arab, Islamic and European delegations to garner support for the resolution.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

الوقت الأردنية تليز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الوقت"



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China reaffirms 'land-for-peace'

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese Premier Li Peng called on Israel Friday to return occupied lands to Arabs if it wants peace, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Mr. Li reaffirmed China's commitment to a "land-for-peace" deal after being briefed on the latest developments in the Middle East by visiting Egyptian Premier Kamal Al Ganzoury. Mr. Li called on both Arab and Israeli negotiators to be practical and flexible in resolving tensions, Xinhua said.

Algerian minister quits his party, stays in cabinet

PARIS (R) — Algeria's Tourism Minister Abul Aziz Ben Mahdi said he had quit the moderate Islamist Algerian Renewal Party (PRA), the official Algerian news agency APS said. He said his resignation was effective immediately, said APS without giving a reason. He remains in the cabinet, which he joined in 1996 in President Liamine "Yahia" Zeroual's drive to broaden the government's base. Mr. Ben Mahdi was the PRA's member on the consultative council policy-making body since 1990 when the party was created. PRA is one of more than 30 political parties preparing for national assembly elections on June 5.

Turkey says 135 rebel Kurds killed

TUNCELI, Turkey (R) — Turkish security forces have killed 135 Kurdish guerrillas in a 10-day-old offensive against the rebels in the mountainous east of the country, military officials said. The toll includes 42 dead announced on Tuesday, the officials said. Ten rebels had been captured alive, they told reporters in Tunceli province, where the air-backed operation is taking place. One soldier has been killed and four injured in the fighting so far, the officials said. More than 22,000 people have died in the PKK's 12-year-old fight for self-rule in the southeast of the country.

Peru rebels alter key demand

LIMA (AFP) — Rebels holding 72 hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence have asked for the release of 30 of their jailed comrades whom they say are ailing, the daily La Republica reported Saturday. If accurate, the move would mark a change in the key demand the rebels have pressed in the hostage crisis for more than four months. Until now, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) has made the release of 440 imprisoned comrades their top demand to end peacefully the protracted hostage crisis. President Alberto Fujimori has flatly refused to do so. The daily, quoting MRTA sources, said most of the 30 are senior strategists in the MRTA and other rebel movements including the "Andean Army" that includes units in Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia and El Salvador. Heading the list of 30 jailed rebels is MRTA founder Victor Polay Campos, said to have a broken collarbone, malnutrition and an eye infection. Also on the list: American Lori Berenson, who was convicted of helping to rent an MRTA safehouse among other charges. She has denied the charges but said she sympathizes with the MRTA.

Netanyahu's political backing begins to crumble; final decision on premier's indictment on Sunday

Peres backs down on call for national unity government

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Political support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing possible indictment in an influence-peddling scandal, began to fray on Friday.

Even so, Israeli newspapers carried reports suggesting Mr. Netanyahu would not be indicted. The leader of the Third Way, a centrist party in the ruling coalition, said Mr. Netanyahu may have to resign to clear the cloud of suspicion hanging over the government even if he is not indicted.

The daily Haaretz quoted a legal source saying "it can be said almost with certainty that an indictment will not be submitted against the prime minister due to lack of sufficient evidence."

There are also serious doubts as to whether an indictment can be issued against Justice Minister Tsachi Hanegbi in terms of fraud and breach of trust since the recommendations in his case are based on the testimony of one central witness, Haaretz reported.

Yediot Ahronot noted that three senior officials in the state attorney's office favored issuing indictments against Mr. Netanyahu, but the state attorney herself and two of her staff leaned towards not issuing an indictment.

A key determinant of which way the decision will go may be whether Mr. Netanyahu is questioned again by police. This is because the police recommendation conditioned indictment on completion of the investigation and a further interrogation of the premier, who was interviewed for four hours by police.

Asked whether Mr. Netanyahu would be questioned again, State Attorney Edna Arbel told reporters Friday "I don't think so" and said she hoped a decision would be made by Sunday.

"We are finishing our work. We are trying to do our best to try to finish this Sunday hopefully and then everyone will know our decision," Ms. Arbel told reporters.

"According to today's likely trend, the decision at the state attorney's office is to issue an indictment against Aryeh Deri alone," said Israeli television reporter Abramovich.

Even if he is not indicted, Mr. Netanyahu faces loss of political support. "If it becomes clear there are serious improprieties as far as democracy and the public are concerned, we won't be able to support the government and will call for early elections," said Yehuda Harel, leader of the four-seat Third Way Party in the Knesset.

The loss of the Third Way alone would not affect Mr. Netanyahu, who has a ruling alliance of six parties which control 66 of the 120-seats in parliament.

Natan Sharansky's Yisrael B'Aliyah Party called a meeting Friday afternoon to debate what should be done by the party which controls seven seats and has broad influence in the Russian immigrant community.

There were signs that other members of his coalition were uneasy even though Mr. Netanyahu still maintained the backing of the majority of right-wing parliament members. Finance Minister Dan Meridor and Communications Minister Limor Livnat have

refused comment until the prosecutors decide whether to charge Mr. Netanyahu. A decision on whether to indict the premier on charges of fraud and breach of public trust is expected on Sunday. The daily Haaretz newspaper quoted sources saying the prosecutors were divided on whether to charge Mr. Netanyahu and that expectations were that he would not be named.

Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres ruled out on Saturday a national unity government following the police recommendation to indict Mr. Netanyahu in a government corruption scandal.

"As the situation stands today, there is no basis for a national unity government," Mr. Peres told Israel army radio.

An indictment against Mr. Netanyahu, the first for an Israeli prime minister, could topple his Likud-led government and bring Labour back in power.

Mr. Peres, who helped engineer the 1993 Israel-PLO peace accords but lost to Mr. Netanyahu in elections last year, has said in the past he would consider joining a national unity government which he believes is the only way to save faltering Israeli peace moves with the Palestinians and other Arab partners.

"If the conclusions are that this government stays put then in my opinion the peace process will have almost lost its chance," Mr. Peres said.

Police recommended that charges be brought against Mr. Netanyahu, his political aide Avigdor Lieberman, Mr. Hanegbi and Arieh Deri, the head of the Shas Party which is also a member of the ruling coalition.

The scandal focuses on the appointment of a Likud Party veteran, Roni Bar-On, as attorney general. Mr. Deri, who is on trial for corruption charges, traded his party's votes in favor of the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron in exchange for an attorney general who would agree to a plea bargain, media reports said.

Several newspaper commentaries, including one in the Yediot Ahronot daily, suggested Mr. Netanyahu would not be indicted because too much of the case against the premier rested on the testimony of one man — believed to be Mr. Deri's former attorney who was angry at not being appointed attorney general.

Opinion surveys published in Israeli newspapers found a low-level of support for Mr. Netanyahu's performance as a result of the scandal but no clear majority in favor of resignation.

A telephone poll of 503 Israelis by the Dahaf organization published in the Yediot Ahronot asked if the premier should resign now.

Fifty-two per cent said he should resign only if he is convicted while 45 per cent said he should quit now whether he is indicted or not. The poll had a 4 per cent margin of error.

A poll in the daily Maariv, however, asked if Mr. Netanyahu should resign and 55 per cent of the 486 adults surveyed by telephone said that he should. The poll had a margin of error of 4.3 per cent.

President Bill Clinton said Friday that Mr. Netanyahu's mushrooming political scandal will not disrupt U.S. peacemaking efforts in the Middle East.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and some of the cabinet members of his government bow their heads in a moment of silence for former President Haim Herzog as the cabinet meets on Friday. First on the left is Tzachi Hanegbi, the justice minister who is also facing indictment along with Mr. Netanyahu in the Israeli government scandal (Reuters photo)

Ross returns; Arafat blames U.S. policy

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States said Friday that major gaps remained between Israeli and Palestinian positions as special envoy Dennis Ross returned from a mission aimed at reviving stalled peace talks.

"Significant work remains to be done between the Israelis and Palestinians. There are important gaps and divisions that remain between (their) positions," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

"But the United States is determined to keep at this and to keep these talks going so that we might find a formula to resume the political negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian authority," Mr. Burns told reporters.

Mr. Ross returned to Washington Friday after a three-day trip to the region for talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

He was attempting to revive talks that have floundered over a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Palestinians have demanded that work stop on the project before they will resume the talks.

Mr. Burns described Mr. Ross' discussions as "very useful" but made clear that the U.S. envoy had never hoped to get the peace talks re-started immediately. "He had no such illusion," Mr. Burns said.

"He wanted to basically move them forward on the ideas that we have put on the table and on their own ideas," he said adding, "we're still not there."

Mr. Burns said one success of the trip had been that Mr. Ross had managed to get Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs together with Mr. Arafat Thursday evening to discuss cooperation.

After his return Saturday, Mr. Ross is due to meet President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to discuss next steps.

On Saturday, Mr. Arafat criticized the United States for continuing to support the Israeli government while it plunged "the whole region into catastrophe," a German magazine reported.

Mr. Arafat told Focus News magazine the United States was not using its influence

enough to help the peace process get back on track and he could not rule out war in the region as a consequence of current Israeli policies.

"The Americans are indeed in a position to put pressure on the Israelis. But they are not doing this," Mr. Arafat said in an interview released ahead of publication on Monday.

"The Americans have supported Israeli policy...in a spectacular way by vetoing United Nations condemnation of the construction of the (Jewish) Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem," he said.

When asked if he ruled out renewed war in the region, Mr. Arafat said: "No. At present the Israeli government is leading the whole region to catastrophe."

Mr. Arafat said the Palestinians were doing their best to prevent more suicide attacks against Israeli citizens.

"No one in the whole world can guarantee they will catch individuals who try to disrupt the peace process with their attacks. But I guarantee we are trying 100 per cent to stop the terror," Mr. Arafat said.

In contradictory news, Mr. Arafat was reported to have agreed to resume security contacts with Israel. State radio, quoting Israeli security officials, said the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) had agreed during the meeting on Friday to restart full security cooperation with Israel.

But a Palestinian official immediately denied the claim.

"Our position has not changed. As we have said umpteen times to the Americans and the Israelis, we will not restart security cooperation while a solution to the current crisis has not been found," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, said.

He said the Palestinian side had agreed only to take part in three-way meetings with U.S. and Israeli officials, and not face-to-face encounters with the Israelis.

"The point of our participation in these meetings is to rebut Israeli allegations that the Palestinian Authority does not fight against terrorism and to prove that we are committed to pursuing the peace process," he added.

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"The point of our participation in these meetings is to rebut Israeli allegations that the Palestinian Authority does not fight against terrorism and to prove that we are committed to pursuing the peace process," he added.

Algerian security forces wipe out terrorist group

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian security forces annihilated a group of armed anti-government militants blamed for the massacre of 32 civilians earlier this week, Algerian newspapers reported Saturday.

Using helicopters and rockets, they attacked the band of 32 men hiding out in an olive grove not far from the site of Monday's massacre, the village of Chaib Mohammad, south of Algiers.

The Islamist guerrillas were located thanks to the sole survivor of a group of five women abducted from the village. Her four companions were raped, beaten and then had their throats cut.

La Tribune reported fierce clashes between the two sides in Wednesday's confrontation, saying "a large number of arms and explosives were seized."

There was no official confirmation of the incident.

Newspapers said the group was responsible for other civilian massacres in the same region, notably the murder of 22 people in Menaia village on April 12 and of 17 people in Amroussa on April 4, and a number of bomb attacks.

The worst massacre occurred two weeks ago when 52 people, mainly women and children, were killed in the hamlet of Thadit south of Algiers.

Meanwhile, Al Khabar newspaper reported that three people were injured Thursday when a bomb exploded in a cemetery in Blida, in northern Algeria.

The bomb was hidden between graves in a cemetery in the Derouiche neighbourhood, the newspaper said.

The attack came a day after a car bomb exploded in a Blida market, killing seven people and injuring 26.

Two civilians were also reported to have been killed by militants in Tazout, east of Algiers, on Tuesday, and two others, including the deputy mayor of Ann Lechikh, near Blida, on Sunday.

An estimated 60,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed since the armed insurgents launched their insurrection against the military-backed government after the cancellation of January 1992 general elections that the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.



Israeli police restrain an ultra-orthodox Jew in clashes over the closure of Bar-Ilan street on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Israel's orthodox clash with police over holy Sabbath

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Ultra-orthodox Jews clashed with police on Sunday over their demands that a major Jerusalem highway be closed on the Jewish Sabbath, causing two injuries and prompting 14 arrests, officials said.

Thousands of demonstrators in traditional black suits and hats massed along Bar Ilan Road to hurl rocks and bottles at passing cars after vowing to fight on after the Israeli Supreme Court ruled to keep the road open last week.

The ruling ended an unofficial eight-month truce along the street and drew threats from members of the ultra-orthodox community to renew weekly Saturday protests against the road being open.

The ruling cancelled last year's decision by Transportation Minister Yitzhak Levy, an Orthodox Jew, to close Bar Ilan street during prayer times on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

Ultra-orthodox Jews had suspended their protests pending the court's decision on leaving appeals against Mr. Levy's edict.

They fought running battles with police most of the day, injuring one demonstrator and one police officer, police officials said.

Fourteen protesters were arrested, including one who hit a press photographer, they added. Police were, however, able to keep the road open for

the few motorists who dared take the thoroughfare, as protesters called them "Nazis" and yelled "Shabbos, Sabbath in Yiddish."

The supreme court ruled on April 13 to keep the major highway linking north and central Jerusalem open on the Jewish Sabbath, infuriating ultra-orthodox Jews who make up 90 per cent of the inhabitants living alongside Bar Ilan.

For observant Jews, strict respect for the Sabbath means operating no machinery, including driving a car and switching on a light.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who was elected with the help of a massive ultra-orthodox vote, told Israeli army radio on Saturday that the ruling was a landmark for Jerusalem's ultra-orthodox population and he does not understand why they are criticising the supreme court.

"It is the first time an Israeli court...has declared that it is an acceptable norm to close a street out of consideration for the religious feelings of people over the Sabbath," Mr. Olmert said. Secular Jews hailed the decision to keep Bar Ilan open as a major step forward for democracy in Israel, where less than 20 per cent of the population is orthodox.

Bar Ilan has become the front line in the battle between ultra-orthodox and secular Jews over how far religious law should be imposed in Israel.

Hajj draws to close as relatives wait for news of 343 fire victims

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AFP) — The annual pilgrimage to Mecca drew to a close on Saturday as frantic relatives awaited news of the 343 pilgrims killed in a huge blaze four days earlier.

Some two million pilgrims who spent a week praying at Islam's holiest sites began to leave Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, for the western city of Jeddah to catch planes, buses and boats home.

They spent their last day here walking round the Kaaba from dawn. The Kaaba is a square building constructed around a black stone, which according to Islamic belief was brought to Earth from Paradise by the Archangel Gabriel.

Over the last few days, the pilgrims sacrificed 350,000 sheep, roasting many of them over open pits, in a Muslim tradition. Saudi emergency workers were scurrying when a small fire started Friday but was quickly brought under control.

Saudi officials said 343 pilgrims were killed in an enormous blaze Tuesday which swept through their camp at Mina, just south of Mecca.

Most of the dead were from India and other Asian countries, Indian officials said.

The Saudi authorities announced Saturday that another 1,537 pilgrims were injured in the inferno which incinerated 70,000 tents, with 25 of them still in hospital and some in a coma.

However, they were yet to announce the identities of the victims.

"It is only now, as pilgrims are leaving, that we will have an exact idea on the nationalities," an Indian liaison officer told AFP. "Those who will not show up to collect their passports will be considered as missing."

"We have started registering the names of those who did show up so that we can tell their families when they call. We are flooded with phone calls."

An advisor to the Saudi interior ministry, Saad Al Arabi Al Harshi, said Saturday that "the fire destroyed everything" in the pilgrims' camp.

"Identification is difficult and will take time because some bodies are badly charred," he said, quoted by the official Qatari news agency.

The victims' plastic identity badges, which they are given in exchange for their passports during the week-long pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia known as the Hajj, were destroyed in the inferno, the official said.

India's national carrier will start return flights for Hajj pilgrims from Saudi Arabia early next week, an official said in New Delhi Saturday.

Air India will operate four charter flights on Monday for 1,800 passengers, an airline spokesman said. Two would land in Bombay, a third in New Delhi and the fourth in the southern city of Madras.

They would be the first of some 120 special flights up

to May 21 to bring back more than 55,000 Indian pilgrims from the desert kingdom, he said.

Relatives in Pakistan and India have been at their wits' end because of the lack of information on who has died or been injured in the fire.

Syed Hasnain, whose father was among the 120,000 Pakistani pilgrims, said in Islamabad that he did not know if his relative "is alive or dead." Sources said frantic relatives were still calling emergency centres set up by the Pakistan Hajj ministry to give out information about the victims. The disaster has prompted Saudi authorities to review their fire-fighting procedures and to make improvements.

"All the services involved will examine ways to put an end to the problem of fires," Mr. Harshi said.

Indian officials have complained of poor coordination with Saudi authorities and a lack of information regarding the catastrophic fire.

First Turkish-Cypriot pilgrims cross Cyprus 'green line'

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Some 500 Turkish-Cypriot pilgrims crossed the 23-year-old "green line" dividing Cyprus for the first time on Saturday to worship at religious sites on the other side.

The pilgrims from break-away Northern Cyprus arrived at a checkpoint in the capital Nicosia aboard 10 buses to be greeted by four Greek-Cypriots bearing olive branches.

They also held a banner which read: "To our Turkish-Cypriot compatriots, let them rejoin us in a united and free country."

The Turkish Cypriots were on their way to the southern town of Larnaca to mark the Muslim feast of Al Adha (sacrifice) at the Hala Sultan shrine to an aunt of the Prophet Muhammad.

Police stepped up security around the Leda Palace checkpoint in Nicosia, the only crossing point between the north and the south, in order to prevent any outbreak of ethnic violence.

It was the first such pilgrimage for Turkish Cypriots across the divide.

In return, as a part of U.N.-sponsored measures to foster goodwill between the two communities, the authorities in the north will authorise a group of Greek Cypriots to cross to Apostolos Andreas Monastery for Greek Easter on April 27.

In another development on Friday, Ecuador's former foreign minister who led U.N. negotiations on the departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was named to spearhead talks aimed at reuniting Cyprus.

The secretary-general is determined to press ahead with the intensified effort to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue," U.N. spokesman Juan Carlos Brandt said in announcing the appointment of Diego Cordovez as special adviser to U.N. Chief Kofi Annan.

Cyprus has been virtually partitioned since 1974 when Turkish troops took over the north of the island after a coup in Nicosia engineered by the junta then ruling Greece.

The United Nations has been trying for decades to reunite the Greek and Turkish Cypriots under a federal system.

Mr. Cordovez was a member of the U.N. Secretariat for 25 years before becoming Ecuador's foreign minister from 1988 to 1992.



A Turkish Cypriot woman solemnly sits on Saturday in front of the Hala Sultan mosque she had to flee 23 years ago when this Cyprus was divided. Greek Cypriot authorities allowed some 500 Turkish Cypriot Muslims to cross for the first time since 1974 to visit the Hala Sultan mosque in the Cypriot city of Larnaca in a good will gesture to ease ethnic tensions between the two communities. Cypriot Muslims believe that the aunt of the Prophet Muhammad is buried in the mosque (AFP photo).

"The secretary-general hopes that the current process will lead to direct talks between the two leaders within the next two or three months," the U.N. spokesman said, referring to President Glafcos Clerides, as head of the Greek Cypriot community, and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş.

"The primary task of Mr. Diego Cordovez will be to prepare and assist the secretary-general in chairing the next rounds of the inter-communal talks," Mr. Brandt added.

As U.N. under-secretary-general for special political affairs from 1981 to 1988, Mr. Cordovez led talks that culminated in the 1988 Geneva accords and eventual Soviet withdrawal

from Afghanistan. He takes up his new U.N. post on April 28.

His U.N. appointment follows a recent announcement that the secretary-general's special representative for Cyprus, former south Korean Foreign Minister Han Sung-Joo, would resign at the end of this month after a year in the post.

Mr. Cordovez's appointment as special adviser to Mr. Annan appears to give him a wider role than that played by Mr. Han and previous U.N. special representatives for Cyprus.

The current burst of diplomatic activity over Cyprus has been spurred by Cypriot hopes of joining the European Union. Membership talks would

be greatly eased if the division of the island were ended.

Another reason for stepped up peace efforts is what the United Nations sees as the dangerous militarisation of Cyprus.

The internationally-recognised Greek Cypriot government has been upgrading its weaponry and earlier this year announced plans to buy S-300 Russian surface-to-air missiles.

Turkey, which said it would prevent the scheduled deployment of the missiles next year, still has more than 30,000 troops in northern Cyprus, where a Turkish Cypriot state was proclaimed in 1983 but is recognised only by Ankara.

Saddam Hussein opponent held at London's Heathrow

LONDON (AP) — The government says it is holding an opponent of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in detention at London's Heathrow Airport while it considers his application for political asylum.

The man, Mashaan Al Jabouri, is leader of the Damascus-based Iraqi Homeland Party which seeks President Saddam's ouster.

The party in a statement in the Syrian capital Thursday expressed concern over Mr. Al Jabouri's detention at Heathrow. He has been held by immigration authorities since he arrived there Monday from Syria. He has applied for political asylum in Britain.

The British national news

agency Press Association reported that British-based Iraqi dissidents had expressed surprise and consternation at Mr. Al Jabouri's detention at Heathrow.

It quoted one unidentified dissident as saying Mr. Al Jabouri has no links with religious fundamentalism or terrorism, has spent the last few years struggling for democracy in his homeland and is "high on Saddam's hit list."

The statement by the Iraqi Homeland Party said British authorities have questioned him in the presence of his lawyer about his activities in Syria. It said he possesses a valid two-year multiple-entry visa which he has used several times to travel to Britain.

The Home Office, the

British government department responsible for immigration and police among other things, said in a statement Thursday that Mr. Al Jabouri was being held at Heathrow under normal immigration powers while his application for asylum was considered.

It said his wife and children are already in Britain with temporary residence permits. It refused to comment further on the reasons for his detention or the nature of his questioning.

Mr. Al Jabouri is a relative of the former Iraqi ambassador to Tunisia, Hamed Al Jabouri, whose defection to Britain in 1993 was seen as a major embarrassment to the Saddam regime.

'Kurdish factions agree to free captives'

WASHINGTON (R) — Rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq agreed to release 131 prisoners at a meeting in Turkey this week, the U.S. State Department said on Friday.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns said that at Wednesday's meeting in Ankara, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) agreed to release 61 detainees from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), while the PUK agreed to free 70 KDP detainees. The agreement came at a regular meeting of the so-called supervisory peace monitoring group, which includes U.S., British and Turkish officials and representatives of the KDP, PUK and Turkoman and Assyrian minorities in northern Iraq.

The group was set up after fighting between the two factions last year in northern Iraq, which has been under western protection since shortly after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf war. The KDP invited Iraqi troops into the enclave last August to help battle its rivals. Fighting continued until the United States arranged a ceasefire in October.

China reaffirms 'land-for-peace' stance in Mideast peace process

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese Premier Li Peng called on Israel Friday to return occupied lands to Arabs if it wants peace, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Mr. Li reaffirmed China's commitment to a "land-for-peace" deal after being briefed on the latest developments in the Middle East by visiting

Egyptian Premier Kamal Al Zanzoury.

Mr. Li called on both Arab and Israeli negotiators to be practical and flexible in resolving tensions, Xinhua said.

The two also discussed economic ties, Taiwan and the return to China in July of Hong Kong, a British colony for 156 years. They signed

agreements to further cooperation on trade, energy and science and technology, Xinhua said.

China has had close relations with many Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organisation since the 1950s. But in the last decade, political and economic ties with Israel have burgeoned.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
13:00Cartoon — Asterix
14:15Cartoon — Phantom of the Opera
15:00French movie
16:30Drama film — Celebration
Family
18:00One hour musical comedy
19:00News in French
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:35Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00Magic Star Awards
20:30Film — McLeod's Daughters
22:00News in English
22:20Jewels/Best Seller (Part 1 of 2)
23:59Tarantula

PRAYER TIMES

04:35Fajr
05:57(Sunrise) Dhuha
12:35Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:12Maghreb
20:34Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefiah, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 623666
Anglican Church Tel. 652826

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 824328
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim885446
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab602507
Dr. Ayman Al Mohtaseb875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah847351
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairook pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Khamasini weather conditions will prevail today and tomorrow. It will be relatively hot, dry, dusty and winds southeasterly moderate to active. Khamasini conditions are expected to end Monday evening with temperatures dropping, humidity rising and winds becoming northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be relatively hot and dusty, winds southerly moderate to active, and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp. Food Control Centre.....637111

Amman11/27
Aqaba16/33
Deserts09/29
Jordan Valley15/32
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 21, Aqaba 30 Humidity
readings: Amman 31 per cent,
Aqaba 23 per cent.

Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617011
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Radio Jordan774111
Jordan Television773111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussain Medical Centre813813/32
Khalidi Maternity644281/6
Akileh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131

University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/66
Italian, Al-Muhajreen77101/3
Al-Bashir77511/26
Army, Marka89161/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital
(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital
(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafess Hospital
(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital
(03)314111

(08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

DEPARTURES

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
09:35Jeddah (RJ)
09:50Larnaca (RJ)
10:10Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:30Bombay (RJ)
10:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:45Beirut (RJ)
17:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00Brussels, Athens (RJ)
18:00Paris (RJ)
18:50London (RJ)
19:10Athens (RJ)
19:20 Madrid, Geneva (add) (RJ)
20:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:30Frankfurt (RJ)
20:40Tunis (RJ)
20:50Rome (RJ)
21:25Vienna (RJ)
01:05Hurghada (add) (RJ)
01:10Cairo (RJ)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel.

07:20London (BA)
07:20Tel Aviv (LY)

Other Flights
12:00Sanaa (IY)
12:00Jeddah (SV)
13:35Bahrain (GF)
15:20Moscow (SU)
21:10Beirut (ME)
21:35Cairo (MS)
23:20Istanbul (TK)
00:59Cairo (MS)
02:15London (BA)

Other Flights
13:30Jeddah (SV)
13:30Sanaa (IY)
14:25Doha (GF)
16:35Moscow (SU)
22:25Cairo (MS)
00:45Amsterdam (KL)
02:00Cairo (MS)
07:00Beirut (ME)
07:55London (BA)
08:15Tel Aviv (LY)

08:15Beirut (RJ)
09:30Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
10:25Frankfurt (RJ)
12:10Tunis (RJ)
12:30Rome (RJ)
12:35Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:45Vienna (RJ)
13:20Athens (RJ)
13:45London (RJ)
14:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:10Cairo (RJ)
21:15New Delhi (RJ)
21:20Jeddah (RJ)
22:10Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:25Damascus (RJ)
22:30Hurghada (add) (RJ)
23:00Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
23:10Bangkok (RJ)
23:40Sanaa (RJ)
03:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
04:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
13:30Jeddah (SV)
13:30Sanaa (IY)
14:25Doha (GF)
16:35Moscow (SU)
22:25Cairo (MS)
00:45Amsterdam (KL)
02:00Cairo (MS)
07:00Beirut (ME)
07:55London (BA)
08:15Tel Aviv (LY)

HILAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman8:00 am every Monday
Arr. Damascus5:00 pm every Monday
Dep. Damascus7:30 am every Sunday
Arr. Amman5:00 pm every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple700/500
Banana600/600
Banana (imported)950/700
Cabbage130/70
Carrot200/150
Cauliflower180/100
Cucumber (large)250/130
Cucumber (small)400/220
Eggplant200/120
Fava beans350/250
Garlic (Green)350/250
Grape fruit230/160
Lemon670/400
Marrow (large)250/120
Marrow (small)400/250
Onion (green)230/130
Onion (dry)400/200
Orange500/350
Peas550/350
Pepper (hot)570/400
Pepper (sweet)650/400
Potato430/200
Spinach240/150
String beans750/450
Tomato310/140

King, Royal family members mark 'Eid Al Adha

AMMAN (J.T.) — Arab and Muslim countries yesterday marked the 'Eid Al Adha (feast of sacrifice); and in Jordan, religious ceremonies were held at mosques around the Kingdom, with observances held at Al Hashemiyeh mosque, attended by His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Royal family members, as well as the chief of the Royal Court, senior government officials and high ranking army and security department officers.

Following prayers, the King visited the tomb of the late Queen Alia where he laid a wreath and recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Later, he and Crown Prince Hassan and Royal family members visited the tombs of the late Kings Abdullah and Talal and the late Queen Mother Zein Al Shara'f where they laid wreaths and recited Koranic verses.

The King offered his good wishes to the Jordanian people in a telephone call to Radio Jordan.

He stated that he was enjoying perfect health following his surgery at Mayo Clinic in the United States.

The King affirmed that his doctors advised him to rest until the end of April to avoid any residual bleeding.

King Hussein underwent surgery for the removal of part of an enlarged prostate



His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and other Royal family members observe the 'Eid Al Adha (feast of sacrifice) at Al Hashemiyeh mosque (photo by Boghos)

and his doctors maintained that the operation was completely successful and that his health is excellent but that he requires rest.

The King maintained that he looks forward to continuing to serve the Jordanian family as well as the Arab nation.

Deputising for King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan received well-wishers for 'Eid Al Adha, during a ceremony held Thursday at the Royal Palace.

Calling to express their good wishes were Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, ministers, members of Parliament, public security and police officials, intelligence authorities, civil defence chiefs and representatives of the Jordan Armed Forces.

Also present were ambassadors, principals of Muslim and Christian communities, representatives of the public and private sectors, heads of professional unions as well as the Cham-

bers of Commerce and Industry, leaders of political parties, heads of tribes and representatives of refugee camps in Jordan.

Present at the ceremony were also Royal family members and other senior officials.

All government departments and public organisations which marked the 'Eid Al Adha with a five-day public holiday, starting last Wednesday, are due to open tomorrow.



His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Royal family members Thursday visit the tombs of the late Kings Abdullah and Talal and the late Queen Mother Zein Al Shara'f where they laid wreaths and recited Koranic verses (photo by Boghos)

Queen receives spouses of dignitaries, visits orphaned children at former palace

AMMAN (J.T.) — On the occasion of 'Eid Al Adha, Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday received spouses of high-ranking Royal Court and government officials as well as representatives of women's sectors at Basman Palace, according to a Royal Court statement.

Later, the Queen visited children residing in Dar Al Birr Bilbara'ern, the former Al Hashemiyah Palace, recently donated by His Majesty King Hussein to the infants of Al Hussein Institution, and was received there by HRH Princess Zein.

The Queen congratulated the staff and volunteers working on the project on the occasion of the Eid and lauded their efforts in creating a model home for indigent children, the statement said.

Queen Noor, who is patron of SOS villages, Jordan, visited the village



Received by HRH Princess Zein, Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday greets children residing in Dar Al Birr Bilbara'ern, the former Al Hashemiyah Palace to mark the 'Eid Al Adha holiday (photo by George Crystal)

in Tabarbour where she was met by board members and the 103 children boys and girls from the village as well as 16 Youth Houses.

French wheat arrives in Jordan en route to Iraq

AMMAN (AP) — The first shipment of French wheat for Iraq, under the U.N. oil-for-food deal, arrived in the port of Aqaba Friday en route to Iraq.

Ramzi Nabr, a shipping agent, said the 52,000-ton shipment is the first batch of 100,000 tons. Iraq is importing from Glencore France Co. The rest will arrive next month.

Mr. Nabr told the Associated Press that the \$12 million shipment, which arrived aboard the Cypriot-flagged

vessel Malama, will immediately be trucked to Baghdad.

Last month, Iraq received its first food shipment from Turkey under the oil-for-food deal which allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil for an initial six-month period to buy food and medicine.

The deal, reached in May but not implemented until December, is a reprieve from U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of

Kuwait. These sanctions, which include a ban on oil exports, will remain in force until arms monitors are satisfied that Iraq has destroyed its mass destruction weapons and long-range missiles and pays war reparations.

Aqaba, Jordan's only sea outlet, handles much of Iraq's imports since the latter's ports were damaged in the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war.

Sudanese envoy concludes visit to Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Sudanese presidential envoy, Major General Abdul Rahim Ahmad Hussein Friday concluded a three-day visit to Jordan during which time he carried a message to His Majesty King Hussein from Sudanese President Omar Bashir dealing with the latest developments in Sudan.

Maj. Gen. Hussein delivered the message to HRH Crown Prince Hassan, and the two reviewed the current situation in Sudan, which faces continued insurgency in the south and east.

At the meeting held at the Royal Court, in the presence of Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh, Maj. Gen. Hussein expressed both the Sudanese leadership and its people's appreciation of Jordan's continued backing for Sudan.

Upon his departure, the Sudanese envoy described his talks with Jordanian leaders as successful by all standards.

Maj. Gen. Hussein also affirmed that he briefed the Crown Prince in regards to



Sudanese presidential envoy, Major General Abdul Rahim Ahmad Hussein meets with HRH Crown Prince Hassan to discuss a message from Sudanese President Omar Bashir as well as the current situation in Sudan (photo by Boghos)

the contents of a peace agreement which Sudan was preparing to sign with rebellious factions on April 21.

He confirmed that his country supports the convening of an Arab summit meeting to discuss the situation in Sudan.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawe', who saw the Sudanese envoy off at the airport, maintained that during Maj. Gen. Hussein's visit Jordanian leaders were briefed on the current situation in Sudan and have extensively discussed

Sudanese-Jordanian relations. Thanking Jordan for its backing of the Sudanese cause, Maj. Gen. Hussein stated that the Kingdom has always contributed to the satisfactory conclusion of various issues facing the Arab nation.

Aqaba revels in 'Eid Al Adha holiday

AQABA (J.T.) — Aqaba beaches were crowded with tourists during the 'Eid Al Adha holiday, which started last Wednesday, according to the Aqaba Tourism Department.

Director Mahmoud Hilalat affirmed that hotels, which have reported a drop in occupancy rates over the past months attributed to political occurrences in the Middle East, reported high occupancy rates during the holiday.

He said that Jordanians, mostly from Amman, were also spending their 'Eid Al Adha vacation in tents which they pitched on the south Aqaba shores.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities last January reported an increase of 2.8 per cent in the number of tourists arriving to the Kingdom during 1996.

The ministry ascribed the decline to developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Domestic tourism seems to have compensated for the low number of foreign tourists in the city, Mr. Hilalat added.

Colonel Adnan Shamaileh, director of the Aqaba Police Department, said that many of the vacationers had arrived in Aqaba in their own cars, prompting the department to operate continuous patrol units to ensure public safety.

Director of the Civil Defence Department (CDD) in Aqaba Lieu-

tenant Colonel Omar Tarawneh said that he opened a special emergency department and placed additional rescue and first aid squads on alert along the beaches.

In January, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities announced that it had developed a comprehensive strategy for the development of the tourism sector in Aqaba and other parts of Jordan through the year 2010.



Pausing from the downtown 'Eid Al Adha bustle, a man quenches his thirst with tea purchased from a local vendor (photo by Yusef 'Allan)



Two men pause to consider toy purchases as gifts for 'Eid Al Adha (photo by Yusef 'Allan)

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

*Works by Lebanese plastic artists at Hamourabi Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until April 24.

*Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

*Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

*Paintings by Vian Shamounki at the Jordan Plastic Art Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 25 (Tel. 623297).

*Paintings by Yassin Al Mohammadani at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303), until April 28.

*Paintings by Patricia Châtelain at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 27.

Jordan Times facsimile #696183

Hopes of Mobutu-Kabila talks stumble over rebel demands

KINSHASA (AFP) — Hopes of direct talks between Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko and rebel leader Laurent Kabila receded Saturday, as demands that Mr. Mobutu quit immediately enraged his entourage and damaged prospects of a face-saving exit.

Mr. Mobutu's special advisor said Friday the president had agreed in principle to meet Mr. Kabila at the request of South African President Nelson Mandela.

But, as the rebels insist the only negotiations they will agree to must be on the manner of his departure, and given the differences on a ceasefire that still divide the warring sides, the chances of an encounter appear remote.

Mr. Mobutu's aide, Honore Ngbanda Nzambo, told a news conference Friday that Mr. Mobutu had accepted Mr. Mandela's invitation for talks, but practical details on time and date remained to be sorted out.

Later Friday, the Zairean government called for a "complete and immediate cessation of hostilities."

Mr. Mandela's spokesman was more confident, saying Mr. Mobutu could meet Mr. Kabila in Cape Town "in the first part of next week, probably Monday or Tuesday."

However, that supposes a sudden climbdown on the part of Mr. Kabila who, with his forces already in control of half the nation and most of its vast mineral resources, can call the shots.

Mr. Kabila has not yet confirmed that he will meet Mr. Mobutu, who the rebels have continually called on to resign throughout their six-month campaign.

On Friday, rebel "foreign minister" Bizima Kahara restated that position, saying "Mobutu must quit power" and "no ceasefire is possible before the end of the war," nor would the rebels ever share power.

"We will not stop hostilities, we want an end to the war. We cannot sign a ceasefire with mercenaries," he added, stating that both negotiations and the military option were open to the rebels.

Mr. Ngbanda rejected any suggestion that Mr. Mobutu should relinquish his 32-

year rule or go into exile, but said there was agreement between the two sides on free and fair elections open to all, including the president.

Cancer-stricken Mobutu, 66, has resolutely clung to power despite the rebel onslaught and announced he may stand if presidential elections are held.

Given his long autocratic hold on power, the rebel demands — coupled with hints from capitals around the world that he should resign — must be hurting Mr. Mobutu's pride.

Mr. Kabila meanwhile continues to threaten to take Kinshasa by June, but says he will spare the lives of expatriates, as if hinting they could be hostages. The rebels say they are 200 kilometres from the capital, although diplomats put them further away.

"What difference is there for Zaire between Mobutu and Kabila," a diplomat here asked Saturday.

"Kabila must understand that routing the Zairean army is one thing, it is not difficult, but colliding with the powerful machinery of

the international community is another matter altogether."

The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, also voiced a rumour that has already surfaced in Kinshasa — the presence of a total of 4,000 Belgian, British, French and U.S. soldiers in neighbouring countries to evacuate foreign nationals if necessary. "He (Kabila) should ask why the West has placed so many of your best troops around Zaire ... to evacuate less than 3,000 people."

The United States last week sent the assault ship Kearsarge, with more than 1,000 Marines aboard, to replace the helicopter landing ship Nassau, which had been stationed off the West Coast of Africa in case a rescue operation became necessary.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it suspended relief work for thousands of Rwandan Hutus in eastern Zaire Friday after Zaireans attacked its staff in a protest over the presence of the unwanted refugees.



A group of Bulgarian Navy sailors look at ballot papers at a polling station in the Black Sea port of Varna Saturday. Voting got underway in Bulgaria Saturday in parliamentary elections forced by demonstrators who took to the streets for month-long protests that toppled the former Socialist government in February (Reuter photo)

Bulgarians vote for reform in polls

SOFIA (R) — Bulgarians voted Saturday in parliamentary elections expected to launch their Balkan country on the path of reform already travelled by many of their East European neighbours.

The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) is expected to capitalise on the support it won from month-long protests which toppled the former Socialist government in February, and the main question is how big their parliamentary majority will be. "I appeal to all Bulgarians to vote because we need as many votes as we can get," said UDF leader Ivan Kostov, voting in the mountain village of Dragalevtsi on the outskirts of Sofia.

An interim cabinet led by Sofia's UDF Mayor Stefan Sofianski has run the country since February, sealing a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and kicking off the reform process the new government must continue.

"The first thing that the government will do after the elections is introduce to parliament the package of laws required for the implemen-

tation of the reforms agreed with the IMF," said Mr. Kostov, who walked to the polling station with his wife Elena.

A restrictive fixed exchange rate regime is due to be introduced in June to instil monetary discipline and restore confidence in the national currency, which went into freefall at the beginning of the year while Bulgaria was without effective government.

The lev has now stabilised, but annual inflation was more than 2,000 per cent in March and the overhaul of Communist-era state firms will add to unemployment already at 14.5 per cent.

"I am equally disappointed with all politicians in Bulgaria but I am voting in the hope of putting an end to what is happening now. This misery cannot continue for ever," said accountant Mario Ivanov.

Salaries, typically \$40 or \$50 a month, have failed to keep up with soaring prices. Grain and petrol almost ran out last month before the interim government secured new supplies.

The interior minister has

launched a high-profile campaign against organised crime, which has soared unchecked since the end of Communist rule, helped by an inadequate legal system.

"I am voting for a new Bulgaria, for a Bulgaria without crime, without corruption, and with clear rules for doing business," said architect Hristo Genchev in Sofia's middle-class Lozenets district.

After Communist leader Todor Zhivkov was toppled in 1989, leading Communists renamed their party Socialist and continued in government. The UDF won elections in 1991 but their government lost a no-confidence vote after only 11 months.

One elderly couple, Stoyan and Ivana Georgiev, said they had voted Socialist in the previous general election in 1994 but would not be backing the former Communists this time round.

"Then we thought they had changed, now we know we were wrong, but unfortunately the price we all paid for this mistake was very high," Ivana said.

15 die in Indonesian plane crash

JAKARTA (R) — Fifteen people were killed and 31 injured in a plane crash Saturday on the Indonesian island of Belitung, officials said.

The official Antara News Agency said a Merpati Nusantara Airlines twin turbo-prop aircraft with 48 passengers and five crew crashed short of the Buluh Tumbang Airport on Belitung, 400 kilometres north of Jakarta at about 8:00 a.m. (0100 GMT).

The aircraft was on a flight to Belitung from Jakarta.

Antara quoted an airline spokesman in Jakarta as saying there were only 48 passengers on the British Aerospace ATP aircraft's flight manifest, including two children and two babies, and not 52 as earlier reported by the agency.

Antara quoted Merpati spokesman Tondo Widodo as saying 15 people, including four crew members, had been killed.

It earlier had said 18 people died. Hospital officials on Belitung also said 15 had died.

"Forty-six people were admitted to hospital. Fifteen have died," a doctor at the Belitung General Hospital told Reuters by telephone.

"We are still observing them and we do not yet have information on how many are seriously injured or have medium or light injuries," he said.

"It appears there were only people from Jakarta and Belitung, but the data on the victims is not yet complete," he added.

Merpati released a full passenger list but could not immediately identify the

dead, except for the 28-year-old pilot Bartholomew Suwardi, his co-pilot Imamthi Dismono, 21, technician Agus Supriyadi, 28 and Stewardess Kramatiningsih, 21.

Search and rescue officials in Jakarta said the cause of the crash was not yet known. But they said the plane had broken into three sections upon impact.

Antara quoted the South Sumatra Provincial Administration as saying Transport Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto had already carried out an initial examination at the site of the accident.

Last December, 18 people died when a twin-engine Casa-212 plunged through the roof of a gas factory in the South Kalimantan provincial capital Banjarmasin.

Belgian police find more body parts in bin bags

BRUSSELS (R) — Belgian police on the trail of a serial killer said Friday they had found three more plastic rubbish bags containing body parts near the southern city of Mons.

Mons' Public Prosecutor Pierre Honore told a news conference that two of the bags found in the village of Havre contained a thigh, while a third one held a forearm and a hand attached to a forearm.

But he added that it was too soon to ascertain whether the gruesome find was linked to similar finds in recent weeks.

"It is too soon to determine whether this find is linked to previous finds," he said.

But he added that the body parts had been cut off in a way similar to other body parts found in recent weeks.

Police have previously found bin bags containing the surgically severed limbs of at least four women in the Mons region.

Last Saturday two plastic sacks containing a woman's head, foot and shin were discovered alongside a road in Havre.

A passing mounted policeman found 10 other bags with body parts by chance in a ditch near the Brussels-Paris rail line in the village of Cuesmes near Mons late last month.

The Mons public prosecutor has said the killings appeared to be the work of one person, noting the precise and identical way in which the bodies had been cut up.

Legal sources have said they were working on the theory that the mutilated body of a fifth woman found in the same area last July was the work of the same killer.

Japanese nuke operator found with more unreported radioactive leaks

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's state agency said Saturday there had been seven more unreported radioactive leaks at the Fugen advanced thermal converter reactor, bringing the number of mishaps to 18 in five years.

The announcement by the Science and Technology Agency is the latest blow to Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp. (DONEN), a state-run nuclear power operator already under fire for a series of accidents and cover-ups.

"During the inspection that ended today, we have found that there were seven additional leaks in two years to March 1994," an agency official said.

But he added that the public should not be "alarmed" by the new findings as the leaks were well below legally permissible levels and could not have caused any health or environmental damage.

The agency has been carrying out the inspection at the Fugen reactor in Tsuruga, some 350 kilometres west of Tokyo, following a tritium leakage last Monday.

Heavy water leaked at Fugen, boosting the air den-

sity of radioactive tritium to 18 times the normal level and exposing 11 workers to low levels of radiation.

DONEN admitted earlier this week that it had failed to report "11 very low level leaks" at Fugen in the past three years.

Jiji Press meanwhile said police planned to raid DONEN's reprocessing plant in Tokai, northeast of Tokyo, early next week as part of investigations into a cover-up of Japan's worst nuclear accident there on March 11, when left 37 workers exposed to low-level radiation.

Police in Ibaraki prefecture launched investigations earlier this week following an unprecedented criminal complaint lodged by the Science and Technology Agency against the company.

DONEN executives allegedly forced plant workers to lie to a government panel investigating the accident in a bid to conceal DONEN's failure to carry out visual inspections of the fire being extinguished.

A major daily reported earlier Saturday the government would dismantle the scandal-hit DONEN and

create a new body to take over its main work.

The Asahi said DONEN, established in 1967 to promote Japan's nuclear power industry, would be disbanded and most of its operations, including its work with uranium, would be privatised.

The government will then establish a new state-owned supervisory body to control nuclear waste and development of fast-breeder reactors, it said.

The paper said the government also planned to completely shut down the 165,000-kilowatt Fugen, whose operation has been halted since Monday's leak.

DONEN was hit by its first major accident in December 1995, when a massive amount of sodium leaked from its fast-breeder Monju reactor in the western city of Tsuruga.

Monju has since been shut down with no prospects of resuming operations.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun said Saturday the government was considering shifting the control of Monju to a private company, to be set up by the nation's electric power suppliers.

Dormant volcano may be an 'old lady' ready to crumble

TACOMA. Washington (AFP) — Washington's Mount Rainier, listed as one of the world's 16 most dangerous volcanoes, may suffer a spontaneous collapse with little or no warning, sending massive mudflows cascading through heavily populated lowlands, geologists warn.

Now dormant, the tallest peak in the western cascade range at 4,393 metres last rumbled in the 1840s, and has for seven years topped a U.N.-sanctioned list of the world's volcanoes primed to erupt again. Because it dominates the heavily populated Seattle-Tacoma area along Washington's Puget Sound, geologists consider it the most hazardous volcano in the United States.

But new evidence on volcanoes now points away from spectacular eruptions like the 1980 Mount St. Helens blast in southern Washington state that decapitated the peak and

rained ash around the world. Even without an eruption, one of Mount Rainier's unstable flanks could give way in a lahar, a fast-flowing river of mud, trees, rocks and water, steamrolling everything in its path.

At least six of these mudflows have reached Puget Sound over the last 5,000 years, said Kevin Scott, a U.S. Geological Survey researcher. Evidence indicates only one of those was triggered by a volcanic eruption.

Increasing the danger of a massive lahar is the volcano's advanced age. At about 500,000 years old, it is eroded, over-steepened, and undermined by seeping glacial water, prompting one geologist to call it "an old lady who could fall to pieces" and another to say simply, "the mountain's rotten."

Further, the "old lady" is draped in a shawl of glaciers and snow heavier than that on any other peak in the

contiguous United States, according to U.S. Geological Service files. Gravity alone could drag down one of the highly unstable slopes.

Should that happen, the small city of Orting, 64 kilometres out on Rainier's perimeter, could be buried in a lahar 12 metres deep within one hour.

The town lies in the path taken by the Osceola mudflow, a catastrophic collapse 5-1/2 millennia ago that spilled the top 600 metres of Rainier down 110 kilometres of river valley.

Residents there now conduct evacuation drills and stockpile emergency provisions as if preparing for nuclear attack.

Bracing for a sudden lahar is "not an academic subject," Mr. Scott said. Twelve years ago, Colombia's Nevada Del Ruiz, a mountain about the size and shape of Rainier, gave way, killing more than 23,000 people.

Afghanistan's worried neighbours help anti-Taleban alliance

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan (AP) — Frightened by the prospect of a strict Islamic regime on their doorstep, Afghanistan's neighbours are trying to halt the northward march of the Taleban religious army.

Here in Mazar-e-Sharif, money from Iran and weapons from Russia are reportedly arriving to bolster forces opposing the Taleban — northern warlord Rashid Dostum and, to the south, Kabul's former military chief, Ahmad Shah Massoud.

"Iran is mostly sending money and clothing. ... All the weapons here are Russian," said Mehmat Samsar,

Turkey's consul general.

The Taleban, an army of one-time seminary students, control about two-thirds of the country, after a series of battles with Mr. Massoud's troops last fall. With the bitter winter months waning, a surge of fighting is expected this spring.

Gen. Dostum and Mr. Massoud accuse Pakistan of arming the Taleban and say Saudi Arabia is abetting the religious army financially. The Taleban denies getting outside help and claims not to have any interest in expanding beyond Afghanistan.

"We do not want to enter anybody's territory or interfere in anyone's internal

affairs," Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Stanikzai told the Associated Press in a recent interview in Kabul. But some countries in the region are not taking any chances.

In recent months, a fleet of 500 new tanks, apparently Russian made, arrived at Gen. Dostum's headquarters via the bridge that spans the Oxus River joining Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In Mr. Massoud's stronghold in the southern Takhar province, residents say cargo flights from Russia and Iran are landing daily.

While Russia says it's not supplying weapons to the anti-Taleban alliance, it openly expresses fear that

the Taleban's brand of Islamic fundamentalism could foment violence in the volatile Central Asian region of the former Soviet Union. Russia already has 25,000 soldiers in Tajikistan trying to put down an Islamic insurgency there.

Four mechanised Russian units were deployed to the Uzbek border town of Termez, 80 kilometres from Mazar-e-Sharif, just a month after the Taleban swept into Kabul in September.

While the Taleban say the notion they are trying to export Islamic fervour is propaganda, Taleban leader Mullah Omar has declared himself the leader of Mus-

lims worldwide. Also, Taleban soldiers in Kabul admit they are interested in spreading their militant style of Islam.

At a conference of Central Asian leaders in February, Tajikistan's President Emonali Rakhmanov said he fully expected the Taleban to invade his country if it controls Afghanistan.

"There is a danger. We can already feel it," he said.

Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose country has accused Taleban rulers of following a brand of Islam not in accord with the teachings of the Koran, last month denied giving military aid to the northern anti-Taleban alliance. Yet inter-

national aid workers have reported seeing heavily guarded trucks with Iranian markings entering northern Afghanistan from Tajikistan.

Gen. Dostum has more than 60,000 soldiers under his command and his arsenal contains two medium-range Scud missile launchers and 27 missiles, according to Mr. Samsar, the Turkish diplomat.

The northern warlord's air force includes 23 working fighter jets and 21 cargo planes as well as helicopter gunships.

Mr. Massoud, meanwhile, has two medium-range Scud missile launchers and several missiles tucked away in

the Panjshir Valley, said Mr. Samsar.

While Mr. Stanikzai has claimed the Taleban are not planning any military forays across Afghanistan's borders, he warned other countries to stay out of Afghanistan. He issued a particular warning to Russia, which invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and got bogged down in a 10-year war, forcing it to withdraw from the country.

"We taught Russia such a lesson that it certainly shouldn't dare to send soldiers to Afghanistan," said Mr. Stanikzai.

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A convoy of Greek military vehicles passes a horse drawn cart in the town Propozine south of Tirana. The Greek transport ship Samos docked Friday in the port of Durres carrying troops and vehicles as part of the 6,000 U.N. backed troops which will protect humanitarian aid convoys in Albania (Reuters photo)

Russia's Communists blast government; tell Yeltsin to quit

MOSCOW (R) — Communist Party chief Gennady Zyuganov blasted Russia's new reformist cabinet Saturday, saying it would deepen social divisions, and called for a campaign of protests to oust President Boris Yeltsin from power.

Speaking to delegates at the fourth party congress in central Moscow, Mr. Zyuganov said the Communists would press for changes in Russia's constitution, which places most power in the hands of the president at parliament's expense.

"The actions of the reshuffled government deprive the country of perspectives for reviving the national economy and improving the life of the workers," said Mr. Zyuganov.

Last month Mr. Yeltsin ordered a radical shake-up of the government that drafted economic liberals Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov into key positions in a bid to kickstart Russia's stalled market reforms.

"This government will undoubtedly carry out policies murderous for Russia," said Mr. Zyuganov, who peppered his address with quotations from Lenin, Josef Stalin and Russian nationalist poets.

Behind him on the podium stood a large bust of Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin and a banner bearing the defunct superpower's insignia, a hammer and sickle.

Mr. Zyuganov, defeated by Mr. Yeltsin in last year's presidential race, said his party should devote more resources to extra-parliamentary protests within the framework of the law.

The party will also start gathering signatures calling for Mr. Yeltsin's resignation, he said.

"The wider and more organised the petition is, the more easily and organically it will grow into a nationwide strike," Mr. Zyuganov said.

After his address, Mr. Zyuganov led some 150 delegates to Red Square to pay their respects and lay wreaths at the mausoleum in front of the Kremlin that houses Lenin's mummified corpse.

The Communists are the largest faction in

the State Duma — lower house of parliament — but lack political clout under the present constitution, drawn up by Mr. Yeltsin after he forcibly dissolved the old Soviet legislature in 1993.

Their planned petition would carry no legal force and pose no direct threat to Mr. Yeltsin or his government.

Party sources told Reuters the petition and other planned protests were aimed mainly at keeping the Communists in the public eye over the coming months.

Parliamentary polls are not due until 1999 and the next presidential election, in which Mr. Yeltsin will not stand, is set for the year 2000.

Mr. Zyuganov said his party would try to mobilise opposition to the government on public holidays on May 1 and May 9, hoping to build on a nationwide day of action last month that brought millions onto the streets to protest against unpaid wages.

But sounding a more cautious note, he added: "A vote of no-confidence in the government, for which we Communists intend to work, would on its own (divorced from the wider struggle) end not with the cabinet's resignation but with its even more harmful mutation and a dissolution of the Duma."

Party sources said the Communists did not favour early parliamentary elections.

As Mr. Zyuganov rallied his supporters, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin — a possible rival of the Communists in the next presidential race — called for greater cooperation between the country's democratic and reformist parties.

Mr. Chernomyrdin told a congress of his centrist Our Home Is Russia party that it should be ready to field its own presidential candidate in 2000, though he stopped short of proposing himself.

Critics say Mr. Chernomyrdin lacks the charisma to be able to succeed Mr. Yeltsin as president, despite the backing of influential financial groups. Supporters say he would have a chance of winning an election if the state machinery united behind him.

NATO warns Bosnia: peace clock is ticking

SARAJEVO (R) — NATO ambassadors told Bosnia's Muslim, Croat and Serb leaders Friday to use the next 15 months of NATO-secured peace to overcome wartime hatreds and pursue political cooperation.

"In our meeting with the presidency we have conveyed a number of very frank and very clear messages — that the parties must take advantage of the secure environment that we provide to begin to re-build their country and to begin the long process of reconciliation," NATO Secretary General Javier Solana told a news conference.

Mr. Solana said alliance ambassadors and the supreme allied commander in Europe, General George Joulwan, delivered the warning during talks with the three-man collective presidency in Sarajevo.

The ambassadors urged the leaders to stop blocking refugees from returning to their homes and to fulfil promises to reopen civilian flights across ethnic boundaries.

The mandate of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force in Bosnia is due to expire by June 1998. It moved into Bosnia after a 1995 peace accord ended the country's 3-1/2 year war and had the tasks of separating rival armies and storing heavy weapons at closely watched sites.

Although Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb armies have complied with the treaty for the most part, political aspects of the accord have gone largely unfulfilled.

Few refugees have returned to rival ethnic communities and freedom of movement remains a privilege of international organisations, as envisaged in the accord, meet regularly but fail to take major decisions.

Mr. Solana was accompanied by the alliance's 15 ambassadors to its policy-making body, the North Atlantic Council.

General Klaus Naumann, chairman of NATO's military committee, said it was ultimately up to Bosnians themselves to ensure the peace took root.

"We paid a high price — we had 64 people killed and we expect now that the other side brings their contributions so that really a lasting peace can be achieved," he said. "We cannot enforce reconciliation, this must come from within."

Mr. Solana declined to comment about NATO's future plans in Bosnia but said the 31,000-strong peace force would leave when its mandate expired.

"If we change our minds, we'll let you know," he said.

ICRC sends emergency aid to rebel-held Albanian city

TIRANA (R) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sent emergency aid to the rebel-held Albanian city of Vlore Saturday as more troops from a multinational security force landed in the troubled Balkan state.

A spokeswoman said the Geneva-based ICRC dispatched trucks carrying food and medicines from the capital Tirana at dawn on a three-hour journey to the southern port of Vlore, which rejects the authority of President Sali Berisha.

"The aid is aimed at 700 beneficiaries in the general and psychiatric hospitals and three orphanages in Vlore," Nina Winquist-Galbe told Reuters.

"The situation is still very unstable throughout the country," she added. But she said the Red Cross had encountered no aggression since they began deliveries last month.

Fery Adlam, the ICRC's deputy head of mission in Albania, said: "Supplies of food and medicines to many state institutions have been disrupted by the crisis."

The ICRC, which has

already made two deliveries to Vlore institutions since mid-March, does not use military escorts despite the arrival this week of an Italian-led multinational force whose mission is to protect humanitarian aid convoys.

Ms. Winquist-Galbe said that one Red Cross team distributing aid this week in northern Albania, near the town of Krume, had visited hospitals which employed more armed guards than doctors in an effort to keep away gunmen.

Albania has been full of guns since an armed insurrection broke out in late February following the collapse of fraudulent savings schemes in which many had invested their life savings.

Angry Albanians ransacked arsenals deserted by troops and police, flooding the country with weapons. Some 300 people have been killed in the violence.

Rebel committees blaming Mr. Berisha for the collapse of the schemes took control of much of the south.

The U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP) handed out small supplies of food

aid to state institutions from across Albania Saturday, officials said.

Vans and cars sent by hospitals, orphanages and homes for the elderly and handicapped around the country drove to the western port of Durres to pick up sacks of wheat flour, beans and vegetable oil.

Italian military spokesman Lieutenant Gianfranco Scelas said 490 Italian soldiers landed by sea in Durres Saturday, the latest arrivals in a force that will eventually number 6,000. Another 550 Italians troops were due Sunday.

A column of two dozen Greek armoured personnel carriers and supply trucks carrying more than 100 soldiers was waiting in a suburb of the city of Fier, one hour's drive from Vlore, Greek defence attaché Alexandros Xiros said.

"This Greek military company is under Italian command. When the Italians give us the orders, we will go into Vlore," Mr. Xiros told Reuters.

Italian military spokesman Paolo Bianchi said he expected the Greeks to

reach Vlore in the next few days.

As the Greek convoy with an Italian military escort travelled south Friday afternoon, local people lined the streets to welcome them.

The multinational force has received a friendly welcome from Albanians, who hope it will help restore law and order.

The relief operation is running in parallel with diplomatic efforts to steer Albania towards early elections in June and end the violence.

King Leka I, back in Albania after a life spent in exile, said Friday he had won a promise from President Berisha to hold a referendum on restoring the monarchy.

"The situation that has been created in the country needs a stabilising factor and I think in me they see a stabilising factor," the 58-year-old king said of his countrymen.

King Leka was due to meet Prime Minister Bashkim Fino later Saturday to discuss Albania's crisis, an official said.

Universe may go up and down — study

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The universe may have an "up" and a "down," contradicting long-held beliefs that space is the same in all directions, according to a new study by U.S. researchers.

"The shocking thing about our result is that there seems to be an absolute axis, a kind of cosmological north star that orients the universe. We don't really know yet what this axis represents," said John Ralston of the University of Kansas.

The study is due to be published Monday in the prestigious Physical Review Letters.

"We don't know if the axis is just a blemish in space or the umbilical cord of the universe," astrophysicist Greg Benford of the University of California at Irvine said, reacting to the paper.

The work could affect physicists' views about the birth of the universe and suggests that scientists may need to explore how Ein-

stein's Theory of Relativity and the Theory of Electromagnetism might explain the finding.

The scientists studied radio waves emitted by 160 galaxies and recorded by observatories around the world. For some reason, they found that the radio waves were twisted into a corkscrew pattern before they reach Earth.

Mr. Ralston said it is unknown if the axis was created 15 billion years ago during the big bang, the cata-

strophic birth of the universe. The axis stretches toward the constellation Sextans in one direction and Aquila in the other, the researchers reported.

They said there is no evidence that the axis causes the universe to rotate.

Mr. Ralston acknowledged that the scientists' findings were so unusual they will be scrutinised heavily.

"Everyone will be skeptical. This will be checked six ways to Sunday. If it is still there, wow!" he said.

Armenian opposition calls for new elections

YEREVAN (R) — About 20,000 opponents of Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan rallied in the capital Yerevan Friday, demanding that he quit or call new elections.

The demonstration in central Yerevan's Freedom Square was part of a planned spring wave of protests organised by opposition forces.

They say the 52-year-old academic's leadership is illegitimate and accuse him of rigging last year's presidential vote, in which he narrowly cleared a first-round majority hurdle.

Foreign observers said the vote was marred by fraud and irregularities serious enough to call into question his reelection to a second term of office.

"We must fight for new, fair elections," prominent opposition politician Paruir Hairikyan told the crowd to loud applause.

Uniformed police milled about the square in bright sunshine but did not try to disrupt the rally.

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan briefly arrested dozens of his detractors after protests led by Vazgen Manukyan, a former prime minister who claims to have won the vote, turned violent.

Mr. Manukyan told opposition supporters to avoid "provocations" that could force another crackdown.

"Despite our resoluteness, we should be rational and shouldn't let the government use provocative measures," he said. "If the people are sure that the government should be changed, then they should be creative about it."

But he called on anti-government forces to "stay united" and organise themselves on all levels of society.

"This show of force obligates the government to agree to compromises, but it isn't enough. You must organise at home and at work," said the bespectacled physicist.

Another big worry for Mr. Ter-Petrosyan this week has been the return of serious border clashes with neighbouring Azerbaijan, with which Armenia has been in conflict for nine years over territory. The clashes were the worst since a 1994 truce.

Interfax News Agency said Mr. Ter-Petrosyan and Azeri President Heydar Aliyev held a telephone conversation Friday in which they expressed concern over the new fighting.

Interfax said each side had reaffirmed their commitment to the ceasefire and had ordered their troops to "obey it very strictly."

Tung's donation to British party fuels storm in H. Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's future leader Tung Chee-Hwa, who plans to ban foreign donations to political groups, drew strong attacks Saturday after he acknowledged having donated money to Britain's Conservative Party.

Critics labelled Mr. Tung a hypocrite and accused him of double standards, saying his credibility as Hong Kong's leader after China takes back the territory from Britain on July 1 was now at stake.

Mr. Tung's office confirmed a front-page report in the English-language South China Morning Post that Mr. Tung had donated \$50,000 (\$81,500) to the Conservative Party before Britain's April 1992 general elections.

The disclosure comes at a sensitive time, just days after Mr. Tung launched plans to ban foreign donations to political parties in Hong Kong after the handover on the grounds that he did not want foreigners meddling in local politics.

"As a person, I have in the past made modest donations to the Conservative Party," Mr. Tung said. "This is a fact well-known to everybody and, as a result, I am particularly sensitive that this should not happen in Hong Kong."

A Tung aide told the

newspaper that billionaire Tung had made the donation in a personal capacity when he was chairman of shipping group Orient Overseas (International) Ltd.

He resigned from that position last October to run for the territory's future leadership post after Governor Chris Patten leaves the British colony on July 1.

Mr. Tung was appointed by Mr. Patten as a member of the Executive Council, or inner cabinet, in October 1992, the same year he donated the sum to the Conservative Party.

Mr. Tung's critics Saturday took aim at him.

"It's really too much for him to do it and then say others cannot do it. It's a question of hypocrisy and double standards and sort of saying 'don't do as I do, do as I say,'" pro-democracy activist Emily Lau told Reuters.

"I just don't think it'll go down very well and it doesn't really help his own credibility. Somehow, people who live in glass houses should think very hard before they throw stones."

Mr. Tung could see his credibility suffer, said law Professor Nihal Jayawickrama at the University of Hong Kong.

"It must affect his credibility if you take up high ground and then you're shown up as having done

previously what you are now preaching against," he told Reuters.

"If he had such strong views about foreigners getting involved in election campaigns and party funds, then why did he do that, and did it create so much damage to the British system?"

"And if it didn't create damage to the British system, why does he think it'll create damage to the Hong Kong system?"

The news coincided with a diplomatic coup scored by Martin Lee, the leader of the popular Democratic Party, who won an audience with United States President Bill Clinton at the White House in Washington Friday.

During the meeting, which was described by Mr. Lee as "warm and successful," Mr. Clinton warned there "would be consequences" if freedom erodes in Hong Kong once China assumes control and assured that "Hong Kong is important to us (the United States)."

Mr. Tung, who previously enjoyed a high popularity rating, has seen his ratings fall in recent weeks, particularly after he launched plans to curb public demonstrations as well as ban foreign funding.

If his plans go ahead, police permission will be needed to hold demonstrations, while under the current system, police need only be notified.

Major savages Blair in U.K. election campaign

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major is attacking Labour leader Tony Blair with ever more personal jibes — likening his rival to a dummy, a fly and a grasshopper as he struggles to make up ground before Britain's May 1 election.

The increasingly acerbic tone of Mr. Major's taunts drew criticism from across the political spectrum, especially after the Conservative British premier embroiled other European leaders in his domestic point-scoring.

On Friday, the Conservatives created a storm of protest with an advertisement that depicted Mr. Blair as a ventriloquist's dummy perched on the knee of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

"Don't send a boy to do a man's job," it read, implying Mr. Blair was not up to negotiating for Britain in Europe.

The advert was the latest in a line of attacks designed to show Mr. Blair as untrustworthy while Mr. Major paints himself as a man of honour with years of high office behind him.

Yet the same Major is taunted daily by opponents as a weak leader beholden to noisy factions in his own party, whereas Mr. Blair has largely silenced the Labour trouble-makers.

Seeking to still the internal revolt, Mr. Major has moved ever closer to the Euro-sceptic wing of his party, with the Kohl poster just the latest shot to those on his right.

Mr. Major took a huge gamble this week by switching the focus of his campaign onto Europe, hoping to put the spotlight on Mr. Blair's lack of experience of international negotiations.

But he has taken off the gloves in an effort to claw back support — and plenty of his fellow statesmen

don't like it. Liberal Democrat peer Roy Jenkins, the only Briton to have held the presidency of the European Commission, said: "I think it is very doubtful bringing in foreign statesmen — whoever wins the election is going to have to work with Kohl."

Former Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Geoffrey Howe expressed sadness that Mr. Major, trailing by 20 points in the polls, had "gone against his natural instincts."

"Britain would be a loser outside Europe...We should be leading Europe, not leaving it," said a cross-party letter to the Times, signed by Lord Howe.

Pro-European members of Mr. Major's government were said to be fuming about the latest turn of events, talking of a party on the verge of collapse and in preparation for opposition.

The increasingly crude and desperate language now used by John Major will inevitably rebound on him. The public will be contemptuous of him and his own party will become increasingly embarrassed," said deputy Labour leader John Prescott.

Nor did Mr. Major show any sign of letting up his attacks, hoping to sow doubt among the electorate about so-called new Labour and win a record fifth Conservative victory.

"Mr. Blair changes his mind as often as a grasshopper jumps," Mr. Major said in a campaign speech Friday night.

He accused Mr. Blair of "naivete and inexperience" and said that sending the Labour leader to negotiate Britain's ties with the European Union would be like sending "a fly to a spiders' convention."

N. Ireland stays high on British election agenda

LONDON (R) — Northern Ireland forced its way onto Britain's election agenda as two minor bomb blasts caused travel chaos and a man was charged with the deadly IRA explosion that first shattered hopes for peace.

Two small blasts at railway stations and a series of bomb warnings Friday were part of a suspected campaign of disruption by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

They ensured Northern Ireland remains a talking point in the British election campaign even if hopes for peace have gone on the back burner until the political situation stabilises.

The IRA is expected to continue its tactics of mass disruption," said the Independent newspaper. "The terrorist organisation believes the strategy is working."

It quoted a Republican source as saying high-profile disruptions that wreak havoc but cost no lives ensured maximum publicity for the group and forced political leaders to discuss the province's problems in the run-up to the May 1 election.

Newspapers even voiced fears that the IRA, which is seeking to end British rule of the province, had somehow won access to the secret travel plans of Prime Minister John Major and said security had been stepped up ahead of the election.

One of Friday's bomb threats was close to a sports stadium that Mr. Major was due to visit. Mr. Major went ahead with his plans but a bomb disposal squad was on hand throughout his visit.

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Politically damaging

TODAY IS Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's date with destiny. State Attorney Edna Arbel will decide whether to bring criminal charges against him over the Bar-On scandal. Police, who were investigating the charge that Netanyahu committed a political blunder by proposing the appointment of Likud activist Roni Bar-On as attorney general in return for political favours, have officially recommended that the prime minister and his alleged accomplices be indicted. Now it is up to the attorney general to decide whether to seek the indictment of the prime minister or only the other three parties including former Minister of Interior Aryeh Deri who is being indicted in another case and who allegedly was seeking to have that case against him dropped in return for his party's support to the prime minister over the Hebron redeployment deal. Netanyahu became personally implicated in bargaining with Deri when he appointed Bar-On as the country's attorney general with powers to prosecute or not prosecute people charged with criminal offences.

If indicted, Netanyahu would be the first-ever Israeli prime minister to be charged with the commission of a crime. Technically speaking, Netanyahu needs not resign if the attorney general files criminal charges against him. Politically speaking, though, the Israeli prime minister would be under tremendous political pressure to resign from office because such a trial would probably take a long time to conclude and because no country can afford to have its leader being tried and govern at the same time. The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had to resign from office in April 1977 for a much lesser charge when he was found to have kept with his wife a joint bank account in Washington, D.C. containing not more than \$2,000.

Obviously the whole affair overshadowed the two-day mission of Dennis Ross, the U.S. envoy to the Middle East. The stakes for peace in the region, however, remain high as long as there is a probable prospect that another government can be established in Israel if the present prime minister falls. For the sake of the ongoing peace process we hope to hear sooner of the Israeli attorney general's decision of whether to go along with the judicious findings and recommendations of a thorough police probe or overrule them for political considerations.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A RECENT statement of condemnation, by the U.N. Human Rights Commission, of Israel's massacre of Lebanese civilians committed a year ago in Cana reflects the world community's growing concern with Israel's continuing aggression on the Arab countries, said Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i. The statement brings to mind, once again, the Israeli's terrorising the Arab citizens of Palestine and Lebanon, and reminds the world of the abhorrent crimes which the Israelis commit against the Arab Nation, said the writer. It is to be regretted, though, that the words of condemnation are not followed by sanctions or other forms of punishment that should be inflicted on Israel for its inhuman practices in Palestine, its aggression on Lebanon and its continued occupation of lands owned by three Arab states, said the writer. The time has come for the world community to stand firm in the face of terrorism and halt the murderous actions of the Israeli leaders, he demanded. The writer said that peace, if it is to prevail in this region, should ensure security for its peoples; the writer also stressed the need for preventing any power from protecting Israel's crimes.

A WRITER for Al Dustour called on the government to place the question of a national health scheme on top of its list of priorities so as to benefit the limited-income groups and the needy people who cannot afford the rising cost of medical treatment. Mohammad Daoud said it is true that government employees, military personnel and employees of the private sector firms are covered by some kind of medical scheme, but there is a group of limited-income and poor families who are still without any medical cover and suffer because they cannot afford treatment in private hospitals. The government has displayed concern with this group and has created a special committee to study a mechanism to ensure medical treatment for them at a reasonable cost, noted the writer. He said that the committee could look into the prospect of increasing the amount deducted from private and public employees' salaries in order to raise sufficient funds for a comprehensive health insurance system. The writer said that larger funds do not only cover the cost of the groups who are not covered by health system but also finance an improvement of the existing government medical insurance system. In view of the sky rocketing prices of medicine and medical treatment at the private hospitals, he said, the majority of the Jordanian public will have relief with the introduction of a comprehensive national health insurance system benefiting all sectors.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Is the warm peace with Israel coming to an end?

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

THE PEACE treaty Jordan signed with Israel on Oct. 26, 1994, has an exceptional strategic value from the Israeli and American points of view. It saved the Arab-Israeli peace process which, at the time, was running into deep trouble, at the brink of collapse.

The bold steps taken by King Hussein and his people raised Jordan's stature as a prominent player in the Middle East region, made Jordan an effective factor, capable of supporting the Palestinians, secured for Israel its longest borders, improved Jordan's relations with Egypt and the Gulf states, with the exception of Kuwait, and converted Jordanian-Israeli borders from ceasefire lines which could flare up and move any time to internationally recognised borders. In general, the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty changed the political landscape in the Middle East.

In contrast with what both Israel and Egypt did at Camp David, when they demanded sizeable American financial aid as a price for the concessions called for by the peace treaty, Jordan did not lay any claim, even though its need for financial help is great. The average per capita income in Jordan is lower than one tenth that of Israel, at least 20

per cent of its population live below the absolute line of poverty and six per cent below the line abject poverty, unemployment reached very high levels and could be in the high twenties.

The peace which Jordan signed is by no means the sort of peace introduced by Camp David accords, which has not much more than ending the state of war and exchanging ambassadors. That Egyptian-Israeli peace was rightly called a cold peace. Now it is about to develop into a cold war. The Jordanian-Israeli peace was warm from the first day. Normalisation and cooperation in all spheres was complete, at least at the official level, it provided a new model that bypassed Camp David and set on an example to be followed.

It was only natural for Israel to welcome the Jordanian peace and the strategic and moral gains that came with it, but it provided almost nothing in return. The Palestinian market is still closed in the face of Jordanian exports, the Israeli markets is practically beyond reach, the additional 50 million cubic metres of potable water from Israel to Jordan, which should have been identified and agreed

upon before the end of 1995, is yet to be seen. An outside observer would be justified to think that full peace and normalisation of relations were demanded by Jordan and that Israel should be compensated for concurring with.

This new model of warm peace, which set a live example and precedent for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli sound peace, was not met with the appreciation it deserves. Disillusioned Jordanians are disappointed. They are defecting to the opposite camp in bounds and leaps. It is not true that Jordanians have no alternative course of action or that they can be taken for granted as Israel and the American peace sponsor may think. Even the Jordanian leadership, which showed the highest level of good will, may not go on showing the same feelings, in light of Israel's intransigence. Signals to that effect are visible to those who want to see them.

In spite of all the one-sided good will demonstrated by Jordan, the Israel-Jordanian warm peace is about to collapse, its conversion to a cold peace. Egyptian style, being in progress. Does that cause any worry anywhere?

Netanyahu knows he can ignore U.S. advice with impunity

By William Pfaff

PARIS — Benjamin Netanyahu could afford to regard his trips to Washington with cynicism, since he was rightly confident that nothing of much consequence would come of them. He was offered earnest advice, which he safely ignored.

President Bill Clinton is indebted politically to American Jewish voters, but so have been some of his predecessors. Much more important is that he apparently has no independent view of what can or should come out of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations — the peace process, as it probably no longer should be called.

His administration is probably incapable of establishing a firm position on the fundamental issues of the conflict. Too many pressures act on it, and any clear stand carries more political negatives than pluses for the White House, the National Security Council and the State

Department.

The basic question Mr. Netanyahu is deciding by making "facts" on the ground is whether Jerusalem will be a Palestinian capital as well as Israel's capital. Israel's official position is that Jerusalem is the unique and undivided capital of the Jewish state, but in the past there has been some room for accommodation of the Palestinian demand that it be theirs, too, and some assurance of established Palestinian interests in the city.

Two Israeli human rights groups have recently published a report on what they call "the silent expulsion of East Jerusalem Palestinians," accomplished by administrative restrictions, expropriations of property and withdrawal of residence permits even from some Palestinians whose families have lived in Jerusalem for generations. Official Israeli policy, set in 1972, is to keep the Arab population of Jerusalem under 26.5 per

cent of the total.

The international community does not, in general, recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital; nor does the United States, which has kept its embassy in Tel Aviv. Whether it will continue to keep it there is another matter. Congress has already resolved that it should not.

There are, however, Christian, as well as Muslim, pressures in support of the principles of Jerusalem as the Holy City of three religions, with some kind of international status or protection.

As some Arab states have influence in Washington, too, the U.S. government tries to appease all sides while avoiding commitments that could prove embarrassing in the long run.

Mr. Netanyahu fully understands the nuances of this situation.

Building Jewish apartments in a historically Arab part of East Jerusalem challenges America's proclaimed impartiality and

demonstrates Arab weakness. Two American vetoes of U.N. resolutions condemning that construction show that Israel's prime minister acts with impunity — the United States will not, or cannot, stop him. The Bush administration made trouble for Israel. Mr. Clinton will not.

Mr. Netanyahu wants to discredit America's claim to be the impartial interlocutor between Israelis and Palestinians. He wants the Palestinians, and the Arab generally, to understand that he is in control of what happens and they have no effective international recourse against what Israel chooses to do. This leaves Israel-Arab relations in their worst condition since Anwar Sadat's trip to Israel in 1977.

Mr. Netanyahu's programme for the Palestinians is limited local autonomy, without national sovereignty, in enclaves separated from one another by Israeli-controlled routes and settlements, under overall Israeli domination. The

Palestinians call his a Bantustan solution.

But it is all Mr. Netanyahu's government offers, and he would say to them that they had better take it while they can.

The Palestinians and the Arab governments have little to offer in opposition, short of another Arab-Israeli war or a permanent Palestinian guerrilla struggle against Israel. That would strengthen the intransigent and apocalyptic right in Israeli politics, which seeks an Arab-free Great Israel.

The remaining obstacle is the Jewish diaspora, if it were to support those forces inside Israel who dread the country's transformation into an apartheid state. Jewish communities abroad — in the United States, but also in Europe — are themselves deeply divided on the policies of the Netanyahu government.

Understandably and no doubt rightly, Jews abroad have in the past been extremely reluctant to try to influence Israel's decisions.

made by the governments elected by Israel's own citizens.

Since the diaspora is predominantly reform or conservative in its religious attachments, it is also preoccupied by the new attempts by certain Orthodox rabbis in Israel to extend their control over the grant of Israeli citizenship and the application of the "right of return." That is a further complication of the situation.

Many friends of Israel have also relied on the United States as a check to Israeli extremism, and as an effective mediator between Israel and the Palestinians and Arab governments.

But they cannot rely on Washington now. Israeli and diaspora liberals have long thought that the United States would stop Mr. Netanyahu before he went too far. It hasn't; it almost certainly won't. The Israeli opposition, and its friends in the diaspora, are on their own.

International Herald Tribune

The incredible shortness of sight

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — Dr. Eyad Sarraj is a Palestinian psychiatrist in Gaza and a campaigner for human rights. I wrote about him last year when he criticised the Palestinian National Authority for mistreatment of prisoners and was then himself imprisoned for 25 days.

Mr. Sarraj is a long-time advocate of peace with Israel. He supported the Camp David agreement when the PLO rejected it. He took part in the post-Madrid peace negotiations in Washington. But now he sees belief in the possibility of peace fading. So he said during a visit to Boston to

receive an award from Physicians for Human Rights.

"People wanted to believe that this peace process would lead to something," he said, "that Netanyahu would go along with it, that he might even be better for it."

"Then came Har Homa. It undermined that thinking. It gave the opponents of peace the chance to say, 'We told you Israel didn't really want peace'."

"Netanyahu's short-sightedness is so painful. All he can see is his power. He plays on fear to build support. The result will be violence, repression, more violence. Everything will erupt, but Israelis will cling

to him in the storm. He will survive — on the bones of the dead."

Mr. Sarraj was talking about despair and bitterness in his own community in Gaza. But the feelings he described are widespread among Palestinians now. In a recent poll, taken by the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies in Nablus on the West Bank, 52 per cent agreed with the statement: "There is no possibility of reaching a solution acceptable to the two parties." It was the first time the poll had found a majority for that position.

No realist can doubt that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent acts have caused an ominous

loss of hope for peace among Palestinians. And not just Palestinians. The Financial Times of London summed up the wider significance:

"Arab governments have lost confidence in the peace process. They are themselves under varying degrees of challenge from Islamic revivalists, and every Israeli step back from peace undermines them."

The Clinton administration's response to this crisis in one of its proudest achievements, the Middle East peace process, seems curiously low-key.

"We want to help," I was told in Washington this past week, "but we can't unless the parties give us some-

thing to work with. Netanyahu will be prime minister for the next four years. Criticising him openly would only build support for his policy."

U.S. officials say they still hope that gestures from the two sides will let talks resume.

But only a bold American demarche, I fear, can save the peace process from crumbling altogether now for lack of trust. Only a U.S. president can make the dominant party in the conflict, America's ally Israel, see again the truth that security lies not in particular bits of territory but in a peace that gives

Palestinians the dignity to build a stable society.

Benjamin Netanyahu is a skillful politician. But he seems to lack the crucial ingredient for a leader who wants to settle an aching conflict. That is the ability to see the other side's needs and treat it with generosity.

Compare Nelson Mandela. He did not harp on the deaths and cruelties inflicted by those who imprisoned him. He made peace. If he had acted like Mr. Netanyahu, playing to his own political extremists, South Africa would be in flames.

The New York Times

'We cannot evade responsibility for our actions' and blame the global markets

By Paul Krugman

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Many observers seem determined to blame global markets for a host of economic and social ills, even when the facts point unmistakably to domestic — and usually political — causes.

For example, policy in France is paralysed not by impersonal market forces but by the determination of its prestige-conscious politicians not to let the franc decline against the German mark. Britain, which has let the pound sink relative to the mark, has steadily reduced its unemployment rate.

The cause of France's paralysis is political rather than economic. And what about the United States?

Critics of the global economy invariably reply that America may be creating lots of jobs but that they are tenuous because of the prevalence of downsizing, which is a reaction to international competition (a line of reasoning that also provides a good excuse for companies undertaking layoffs). Of course, international

competition plays a role in some downsizings, but it is hardly the most important cause of the phenomenon. To my knowledge there are no Japanese keiretsu competing to carry my long-distance calls, or South Korean conglomerates offering me local service. Nor have many Americans started buying their home appliances at Mexican stores or smoking French cigarettes. I cannot fly Cathay Pacific from Boston to New York.

"What explains this propensity to overstate the importance of global markets? In part, it sounds sophisticated. Pontificating about globalisation is an easy way to get attention. But there is also a deeper cause — an odd sort of tacit agreement between the left and the right to pretend that exotic global forces are at work even when the real action is prosaically domestic."

What explains this propensity to overstate the importance of global markets? In part, it sounds sophisticated. Pontificating about globalisation is an easy way to get attention. But there is also a deeper cause — an odd sort of tacit agreement between

the left and the right to pretend that exotic global forces are at work even when the real action is prosaically domestic.

Many on the left dislike the global marketplace because it epitomises what they dislike about markets in general: the fact that nobody is in charge.

Meanwhile, many on the right use the rhetoric of globalisation to argue that business can no longer be expected to meet any social obligations.

The overheated oratory encourages fatalism, a sense that we cannot come to grips with our problems because they are bigger than we are. Such fatalism is already well advanced in Western Europe, where the public speaks vaguely of the "economic horror" inflicted by world markets instead of turning a critical eye on the domestic leaders whose policies have failed.

None of the important constraints on American economic and social policy come from abroad. Americans have the resources to take far better care of their poor and unlucky than they do.

If policies have become increasingly mean-spirited, that is a political choice, not something imposed by anonymous forces. We cannot evade responsibility for our actions by claiming that global markets made us do it.

The writer is professor of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

LETTERS

Peace overcomes fear

To the Editor:

THE STONE-throwing Palestinian resistance should be supported by peace-loving Arabs in the same way Britain helped the liberation of European countries terrorised by Hitler's Germany.

In the European countries occupied by Germany in World War II, underground resistance forces were supplied with arms and ammunition. At the very least, Palestinian stone throwers should be equipped with bullet-proof shields and gas masks to lessen the sad toll of youth injury and death. The protection equipment could be funded by peace-loving organisations of the United Nations and European Union.

Israelis should be made to realise that it was by the generosity of the Arabs that they were enabled to have a foothold in Palestine. When the Palestine Regiment was formed, two companies Arab, one company Jews, they fought successfully together in World War II. Now that they have the majority of the land they should not let a Nazi-like greed spoil their obvious achievements for they know all too well what happened to Hitler's Germany during the period of terrorism.

Only peace and freedom, I believe, will eventually liberate the Middle East from fear.

Paul Saint,
48 Prince Mohammad Street,
Aqaba.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Arafat in quandary as dream fades

By David Hirst

LIKE OTHER Middle Eastern autocrats, whom he increasingly resembles, Yasser Arafat seems to think that nothing inspires and uplifts his people like outside portraits of his beaming, benevolent self.

But the ornate floodlit addition to them that recently went up in Muntaza Square bears an embarrassing quotation from the Palestinian leader: "Only with you, Oh Jerusalem, will my dream be complete."

Mr. Arafat's "dream" is that he will eventually set up a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That may look improbable now. Indeed, each stage of the peace process may appear to make it less, not more, attainable.

But that, Mr. Arafat contends, is appearance only. Natural justice, the tide of history, the dynamics of the process, will make it come true in the end.

So far, he has persuaded his people of this, or at least he behaves as if he had.

In truth, fewer and fewer people do believe it, because with each step in the so-called interim period



Yasser Arafat

of the Middle East peace formula reached in Oslo, he gives more away. By the time it comes to the "final status" issues, of which Jerusalem is chief, there will be precious little left to negotiate.

"He boasted about Hebron," said Haidar Abdul Shafi, Gaza's elder statesman. "But to my mind it was an unmitigated disaster. Now we have Har Homa."

The point about Har

Homa is that if Israel's latest building project in East Jerusalem goes through, it will shatter the myth of the attainability of Mr. Arafat's dream, shattering it in the most dramatic possible way — in the Holy City itself.

In its timing, symbolism and emotional impact, this 6,500-apartment complex is not just another settlement, not even just another Jewish neighbourhood in Mr. Arafat's future capital. Just as the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has turned it into an existential question on which the destiny of Zionism hinges, so Palestinians consider that if they give away on this, they virtually lose Jerusalem itself.

It would be a terrible badge of shame for Mr. Arafat. Abdullah Hourani, a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official, said: "In the past, it was others who sold out on our behalf, or pushed us into doing so ourselves. Jerusalem is a crisis for everyone, especially King Hussein and President (Hosni) Mubarak. But the real crisis is Arafat's. This time he himself would be burying the dream, signing away our birthright with his own hands. I don't believe

he can do it."

Mr. Arafat is still Mr. Palestine, the sole leader, with a charisma and historical legitimacy all his own. But he is losing them fast.

That is not only because of his conduct of the peace process, but because he is proving grievously wanting in that other great and complementary task, the building of his state-in-the-making.

The perfidious "Zionist foe" is no longer seen as the only source of Palestinian woes. Economic misery, corruption, abuse of human rights, the creation of a vast apparatus of repression — all flow wholly or in part from the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) over which he presides.

Nor, in these conditions, is it only the Islamist Hamas movement that opposes him. To be sure, they are his most potent — and clever — adversaries.

They have the wit to show their hand — as with last week's Tel Aviv suicide bombing — only when they know that the tide of public emotion is shifting in their favour, which it does when the Israelis humiliate Mr. Arafat and play havoc with the demeaning strategy for

which he stands.

More significant, now, than Hamas are new stirrings of discontent within Fatah, Mr. Arafat's own organisation.

Alarmed at his endless concessions, and fearful that Hamas will steal the "street" from them, some Fatah militants urge a return to the armed struggle on which Mr. Arafat once exclusively relied.

Even some of his top officials make no bones about it: they would be deeply shocked, to say the least, if he backed down once again, resuming the peace process as if nothing had happened.

As head of preventative security, and chief coordinator with Israeli intelligence, Mohammad Dahlan is the second most powerful man in Gaza. But not so long ago he was leading the Fatah Hawks in the intifada.

When I asked him if he would act on Israel's latest demand for a crackdown on Hamas, he was contemptuous. "Could I do that even as I tear up Oslo itself? My own mother would disown me."

"So what do you think the people would think? As it is, some already say that I

am ..." — he hesitated in search of the word — "unpatriotic."

Mr. Arafat is still relying on diplomacy to overcome the gravest crisis the peace process has faced. He has hopes of the traditional, time-worn emergency mechanisms of Oslo, chief of which is that whenever the two parties reach total deadlock, the United States intervenes as "honest broker."

Yet for Mr. Arafat, the U.S. is not an impartial arbiter. Instead of redressing the balance in favour of the weaker party — the Palestinians — it tends to furnish yet more muscle to the stronger — Israel. But since the peace process, and probably Mr. Arafat's survival, depends on the preservation of U.S. favour, he has little choice but to acquiesce in fresh retreats.

It looks as if the U.S. thinks it can count on his pliancy yet again. Sceptical at first about the "green light" Mr. Arafat is supposed to have given the Hamas terrorists before the Tel Aviv cafe bombing, Washington has rallied to the Israeli line.

From Mr. Arafat, he now wants an unequivocal "red light." What it wants from

Mr. Netanyahu, it has yet to say.

Sooner or later there will come a crisis in which Mr. Arafat can be made to bend no further. He will break or resist, with his people — rather than the U.S. as his instruments.

Some in Gaza think this momentous, defining crisis is already here. Others think Mr. Arafat will somehow defer it. But the people are already venturing down the path on which he may eventually gamble his all.

The stone-throwers of Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Bir Zeit preface a new intifada, the suicide bomber of Tel Aviv a new reign of Islamist terror.

Mr. Arafat cannot continue to switch "spontaneous" popular outrage on and off to suit his diplomatic convenience. He no longer commands enough respect. Without a resolution of this crisis, the demonstrations, partly led by his Fatah militants, will almost certainly spread. Amid growing insurrection, their Hamas rivals will not need a green light from anyone to make their own deadly contributions.

The Guardian

Comet Hale-Bopp still visible in the Jordanian sky

By Hani Dalee

AFTER REACHING its perihelion (the closest point from sun) on the April 1, Comet Hale-Bopp started moving away from the sun into its journey for the next 2,379 years when it is expected to be seen from our planet next time.

Comet Hale-Bopp got its importance and due to its brightness, stronger than that of the famous Comet Halley which visited us in 1986. Comet Halley, which was given special interest and was met by some spacecraft, was not as clearly visible as Hale-Bopp is.

Even though it is bright, a large numbers of people could not see Hale-Bopp due to the unfavourable weather conditions; that even cancelled some star gazing organised by the Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS).

Nevertheless, the comet is still visible for those who did not see it yet. The comet can be seen high above the north-western horizon after sunset and during dusk, up until about 8:30 p.m.. It can be easily distinguished from other stars due to its tail (short, due to the lights and dust of the city).

JAS, during its 16th astronomical camp held in Al Azraq desert between April 2-4, got some good shots of Hale-Bopp due to the exceptionally clear sky over there. Two tails were visible, a gaseous blue tail and a dust white tail extending for more than 15 degrees in the sky (30 times the size of the full moon) and revealing the stars through its tails.



Comet Hale-Bopp with the gaseous tail (upper part) and the dust white tail (below), extending for more than 15 degrees in the sky (photo by Hani Dalee)

The sun spots (five groups of them), on the disc of the sun, responsible for the newly discovered solar storm reaching Earth and disturbing the upper atmosphere, were also observed.

The writer is member of the Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS). He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

London's south bank emerges from years of neglect

By Jill Serjeant
Reuters

LONDON — On the shabby, neglected South Bank of the River Thames a derelict power station is being transformed into Britain's leading modern art gallery.

In its towering shadow, a thatched-roof replica of William Shakespeare's 16th century Globe theatre is making an incongruous comeback on the rejuvenated southern riverside.

Long considered the poor cousin of the bustling heartland of London, the south bank of the Thames is being transformed as projects ranging from a new pedestrian bridge to a

glass-covered walkway emerge from the stuff of dreams into reality.

Most ambitious is the plan to turn the vast bank-side power station into the Tate Gallery of modern art in a £106 million (\$164 million) conversion due to open in the year 2000.

With unrestricted views of St. Paul's Cathedral directly across the river, the Tate conversion will include a rooftop restaurant and indoor piazza expected to bring new life to one of London's poorest areas.

"Just as the Pompidou Centre has successfully attracted visitors to a previously neglected area of Paris, the regeneration of bankside will create a new

focus south of the Thames and revitalise the area," said National Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley.

New restaurants, small designer studios and low-rent housing for local people are all linked by a tranquil riverside walkway, far from the roar of traffic alongside the north bank.

The south bank area was once the entertainment district of London, home to Rowdy Inns, theatres and bear-baiting pits out of reach of authorities over the river in the city.

In the 19th century it became an area of wharves, warehouses and prisons but it suffered heavy bombing in World War II. The population shrunk from 50,000

at the turn of the century to 4,000 in 1970.

For more than two decades, the concrete monoliths of the national theatre and the festival hall stood in lonely isolation on the south bank, surrounded by derelict land and "cardboard city" encampments of homeless people.

Unlike London's last experiment with regeneration in the docklands area, where office blocks and the towering Canary Wharf stand as monuments to the get-rich-quick Thatcher years, the south bank's makeover is more piecemeal and people-friendly.

Residents, businesses and local councils are pooling ideas and resources after

local people won a battle with planners in the late 1970s over a proposed office and hotel development and succeeded in buying part of the land themselves.

"There has been a sea change in attitude in the last five years," said Ian Tuckett, director of Coin Street Community Builders.

"The economics of development have changed. There is more interest in shops, catering and housing, which is really what the area needed rather than more offices which was the economic push during the 1970s," Mr. Tuckett said.

Coin Street Community Builders have transformed

a derelict meat-packing warehouse under the Oxo Tower into a complex of low-rent apartments for local families and artists studios.

They leased the top floor of the Oxo Tower to Elite Store Harvey Nichols — a favourite haunt of Princess Diana — for an upmarket restaurant with stunning views of some of London's most famous landmarks.

Money from the hugely-successful national lottery, started in 1994, is encouraging artistic projects like the Tate Gallery conversion that would not have got off the ground before.

A planned pedestrian bridge — the first across the Thames for 100 years

— will link the new Tate Gallery to the steps of St. Paul's, providing a lifeline between what will be two of London's top tourist attractions.

"It has a phenomenal location. It is literally between the city and the West End. There is a fantastic opportunity in the river walk where, unlike the north bank, there is no road beside it," said Mr. Tuckett.

Plans are also under way to spruce up the area around nearby Waterloo Station, now Europe's gateway to London as the terminal for Eurostar trains arriving through the Channel tunnel.

Leading British architect

Sir Richard Rogers has been campaigning for a decade for the regeneration of the River Thames, which he sees as London's most underused asset.

He has submitted plans for a glass canopy linking the festival hall and Hayward Gallery on the south bank, with venues for outdoor cafes and restaurants.

"If funding is given to the Richard Rogers scheme to enclose the south bank centre in glass, we will finally begin to redress the current imbalance between London north and south of the Thames," said designer Sir Terence Conran.

Agricultural study sees Arabs relying more on imported wheat and sugar

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are set to boost imports of wheat and sugar in the next few years as farm production will lag behind their population growth rates and their arable land is largely untapped.

In a study on the agricultural sector in the 22-member Arab League, the Khartoum-based Arab Corporation for Agricultural Investment and Development (ACAID) said regional states already reeled under heavy food import bills, although they have enough land to feed themselves and export surplus product.

Despite a steady increase in their wheat consumption, output has declined over the past few years because of adverse climatic conditions, failure to exploit arable areas and lack of investments and incentives.

The report, received here, said wheat production dropped to 17.3 million tonnes in 1995 from 19.4 million tonnes in 1994 while imports of such crops increased to

16.1 million tonnes from 12.7 million tonnes.

"The Arab countries have made headway in achieving self-sufficiency in some products. But it remains low in wheat and sugar, standing at around 58 per cent and 38 per cent respectively," the report said. "The gap is expected to grow in the next few years due to higher consumption and population growth."

The study showed Arab states produced an average 2.01 million tonnes of sugar per year during the first half of 1990s but consumption was running at 5.33 million tonnes, creating a gap of nearly 3.3 million tonnes annually.

The gap was valued at around 1.3 billion tonnes a year and a steady rise in consumption will widen it to \$2.2 billion in 2000, it said.

Arab states have been reeling under a heavy bill of import of most kinds of food products despite their vast arable land.

Their agricultural imports were estimated at more than \$15 billion a

year in the first half of the 1990s while exports did not exceed \$5 billion a year. This has created a cumulative gap of around \$48 billion between 1991 and 1995 and more than \$160 billion since 1980.

The problem has exacerbated over the past decade due to lack of investment and incentives in the farming sector, inadequate agricultural policies, non-exploitation of the arable areas and conflicts in some member states.

According to the Arab League, the region has nearly 198 million hectares in arable land but only around 66 million hectares are cultivated.

While the population of Arab countries is growing at an average four per cent a year, growth in their farm production has remained at as low as two per cent.

"The arable land in the region is under-developed. This is because of the absence of funds for agricultural projects and instability in such fertile countries as Sudan,

Somalia, Iraq and previously Lebanon," an expert said.

"Funds could come from Gulf oil producers, which are the biggest food importers in the region given their desert nature. But they have been reluctant to do so due to their political differences with some members," he pointed out.

The experts cited new Saudi economic policies as another reason for the expected widening in the wheat gap in the Arab region. They referred to plans by the Gulf kingdom, the world's top oil producer, to gradually remove subsidies to agriculture and other sectors as part of economic reforms designed to offset a decline in its crude export earnings.

"Saudi Arabia is among the biggest wheat producers in the world. But I believe output will decline because this sector is heavily subsidised and will become very costly once subsidies are removed," an expert said.

Report shows South Asia poorest region in the world

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — South Asia is the poorest and most illiterate region in the world, yet its governments buy more weapons than anyone else.

"The South Asia region has been sinking fast into a quagmire of human deprivation and despair, emerging as the most deprived region in the world," says a United Nations-funded report.

"To many people, the blunt facts, stated in this report may come as a shock," said Mahbub ul Haq, the author of the report and founder of the Pakistan-based Human Development Centre.

The 153-page report offers a litany of statistics that show South Asia's deprivation:

— More children go to bed hungry every night in South Asia than anywhere else in the world, including sub-Saharan Africa.

— An estimated 134 million children work in South

Asia. Many of these children work over 15 hours a day and are often physically abused.

— Of every 100,000 children born in South Asia, nearly 600 mothers will die. In Bangladesh it is even higher at 850 maternal deaths and in Bhutan, still higher, with 1,600 mothers dying.

— The World Bank estimates that the region contains about 40 per cent of the world's absolute poor surviving on just \$1 a day.

— India spends \$10 per capita on defence and Pakistan \$26 per capita. On health and education India spends \$14 per person and Pakistan \$10.

The report defines South Asia as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

Mr. Haq said the reasons for South Asia's slide are many: Political instability, bad governments, corruption, lawlessness.

"No one is going to take a

chance investing in this region," he said.

The two political powerhouses in the region, India and Pakistan, are believed to have the capability to build a nuclear bomb and they are on the verge of embarking on a missile race.

"The most frightening aspects of the current Indo-Pakistan confrontation is the rapid acquisition of modern weaponry by both countries," the report says. "Such huge investments are preempting scarce financial resources urgently needed for human development," it said.

Mr. Haq's report laid out a tough agenda for change. "It requires primary schooling for 126 million children, basic health care for 690 million people, safe drinking water for 770 million people, adequate nutrition for 87 million children and provision of family planning services to 287 million married couples,"

according to the report.

And all this will cost about \$129 billion over the next 15 years or \$8.6 billion a year.

But Mr. Haq said a lot of tough decisions would have to be made, like massive reductions in defence spending "in line with the rest of the world."

Just a five per cent cut in spending could mean an additional \$80 billion in the next 15 years.

But it's possible, said Mr. Haq.

"It's amazing how much can change with just good government," he said in an interview.

Mr. Haq said the people in the region are putting increasing pressure on their governments, demanding jobs, good government and less corruption.

"People are really scared... unless it is done now we are really going down the drain," he said.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Prices as at 16/04/97 17:56									
US Dollar	1.7283	0.8185	1.4885	125.73	1.3887	1702.00	1.9410	3.3066	
DE Mark	0.5786	0.3563	0.8802	72.71	0.3085	964.90	1.1236	3.3616	
GB Sterling	1.6220	2.8032	2.3631	203.78	2.2857	2760.64	3.1483	9.4198	
CH Franc	0.8810	117.58	8.4193	85.38	0.8818	1158.34	132.11	3.8947	
JP Yen	0.0080	1.3738	0.4899	1.1675	1.1119	13.54	164.48	4.6204	
CA Dollar	0.7148	1.2347	2.4405	1.0484	1.11	1217.03	1.3475	4.1610	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0147	0.3618	0.0862	1388.78	0.8211	1.41	3.4130	
NL Guilder	0.5132	68.96	0.5185	78.87	0.4718	875.78	1.3875	2.8895	
FR Franc	0.1722	0.2973	0.1080	25.2584	21.61	0.2406	33.42	33.4200	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
US Dollar	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6400	0.3041	3.6728	1640.00	3.3600	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	0.2972	0.3324	0.1412	0.4294	8.1673	2176.14	4.7828	
GB Sterling	0.2866	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	410.82	0.9028	
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.0791	0.9498	0.86	0.8098	0.74	4085.21	6.9821	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	1.0303	0.0836	1.01	423.08	0.9302	
Kuwait Dinar	3.2888	2.3286	1.2348	1.2386	1.197	12.08	6064.36	0.9302	
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0208	0.0811	0.8828	419.32	0.9320	
Lebanese L1000	0.85	0.4597	2.4383	2.3436	0.1874	2.3849	1.1	2.1987	
Egyptian	0.2963	0.2091	1.1076	0.1113	1.0750	0.0888	1.0846	454.81	

Energy	
Brent	17.35 17.45
WTI	19.40 19.55
Bony	17.35 17.45
Dubai	16.80 16.95
UL Gas	187.00 189.00

Mid-East Currencies	
SA Riyal	0.2886 0.4689 0.16439 0.39182 33.5379
AE Dirham	0.2723 0.47077 0.16787 0.40013 34.2477
KW Dinar	3.2888 2.3286 1.2348 1.2386 1.197 12.08 6064.36 0.9302
Qatar Dinar	0.2747 0.1948 1.0303 1.0303 0.0836 1.01 423.08 0.9302
Emirate Dinar	0.2723 0.1928 1.0212 1.0208 0.0811 0.8828 419.32 0.9320
Lebanese L1000	0.85 0.4597 2.4383 2.3436 0.1874 2.3849 1.1 2.1987
Egyptian	0.2963 0.2091 1.1076 0.1113 1.0750 0.0888 1.0846 454.81

Metal Prices	
Gold (oz's)	339.8 340.3
Silver (oz's)	4.76 4.8
Platinum (oz's)	365.9 368.9
AL (3 Months)	1553 1554
CU (3 Months)	2271 2275
Zinc (3 Months)	1252 1255
Lead (3 Months)	642 643
NI (3 Months)	7310 7330

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
USD	5.52 5.73 5.89 5.99 6.28
GBP	6.02 6.29 6.49 6.64 6.85
JPY	0.53 0.58 0.64 0.65 0.65
DEM	3.12 3.30 3.50 3.18 3.19
FRF	3.18 3.18 3.22 3.27 3.32
CHF	1.85 1.78 1.84 1.85 1.83
ITL	6.96 6.82 6.75 6.64 6.65

Main Equity Indices	
New York	DOW JONES 6591.97 4.81 0.07 6593.99 6588.68 6587.16
New York	S&P 500 754.55 0.17 0.02 754.53 751.98 754.72
London	FT-SE 100 4288.3 3 0.07 4307.4 4280.2 4288.3
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225 14034.2 97.81 0.54 14093.9 13998.2 13933.8
Paris	CAC 40 2620.01 0.62 0.02 2640.25 2602.06 2620.63
Frankfurt	DAX 3383.46 25.77 0.77 3388.28 3345.6 3327.68

Energy	
Coffee (c/lbs)	196.25 Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1477 Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	310.6 Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	0 Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.83 Spot
Tea (kg/kg)	142 Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0 Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	480 Spot

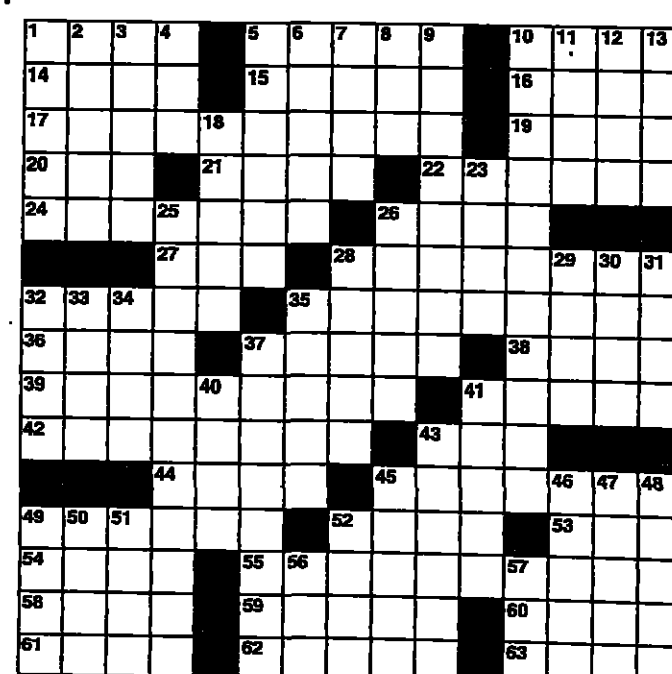
JOD Cross Rates	
US Dollar	0.708 0.710
GB Sterling	1.4476 1.1832
DE Mark	0.4083 0.4103
CH Franc	0.4801 0.4826
FR Franc	0.1214 0.122
JP Yen	0.58 0.5828
NL Guilder	0.3631 0.3649
IT Lira	0.4186 0.4176

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Tent city
 - Time-honored neutrals
 - Miscue
 - Sanction misdeeds
 - It's from the heart
 - Poi source
 - Gear for Walton
 - Lend of tennis
 - Mean Arin
 - Probability
 - Mysterious
 - Monstrous
 - Basra's land: var.
 - Plumber's joint
 - Winter cold indicators
 - Flat beans
 - Notable anniversary
 - Beginning with
 - Painful spots
 - seed (deteriorate)
 - Safari supplier
 - Charge, in a way
 - Love birds
 - Karel Capek's play
 - Turn loose
 - Italy's Gulf of —
 - Another output
 - Parisian friend
 - Cottonseed product
 - Jai —
 - Pelican State capital
 - Feudal toiler
 - Pontificate
 - Cruising
 - Accept
 - Predatory birds
 - "Show Boat" composer

- DOWN
- Antilles Indian
 - Home
 - Communicators
 - Harper Valley gp.
 - Wrangler's seat
 - Verbose
 - Nettles
 - Canonized mlie.
 - Wages
 - Rudimentary drawing
 - Molten rock
 - Asian land
 - Johnny cake kin
 - Whole and half
 - Whitewater vessel
 - Bread, proverbially
 - sanctum
 - Paddock paper
 - City in Spain
 - Musical James
 - Attempt
 - Vientiane's country
 - The jig —
 - Fictional sleuth
 - Dame
 - African antelope
 - Memo phrase
 - Sovereign
 - Baseball's Tim
 - Clobbered, old style
 - Awaken
 - Niamey's land
 - City on the Allegheny
 - History
 - Olive genus
 - Harmless prank
 - Flat —
 - "Exodus" hero
 - Mighty symbol



by Gerald R. Ferguson

04/08/97

Monday's Puzzle solved:

LAMAS	BLAB	BAAS
ARUBA	AURA	RIMU
PULLMAN	CAUR	ADAM
GLESS	ETTA	ETA
ROCS	EBDIC	
DAD	NETS	RARE
EPIC	NUTS	COCA
BEDAND	BREAKFAST	
DANA	SING	TMEN
COIF	ADAR	PAT
RETELL	ASTAS	
ALI	SETH	EVICT
NICE	CRUISE	SHIP
ETAL	KILN	LAIN
EELY	SPAN	SLATS

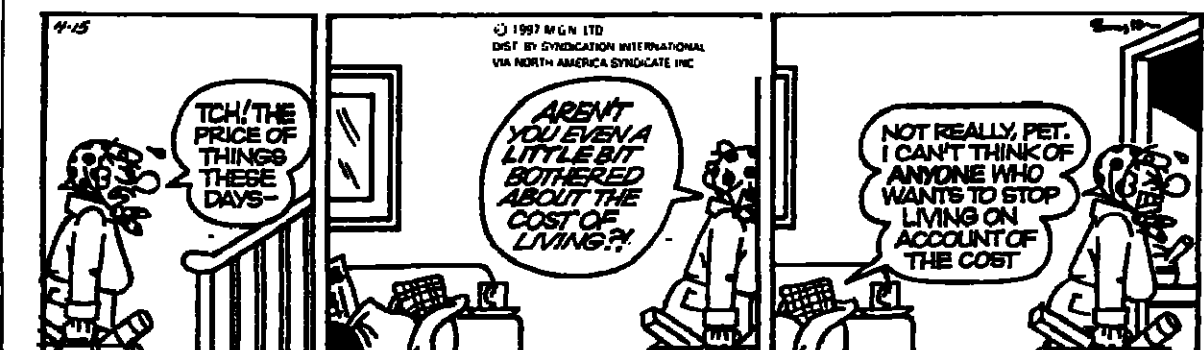
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04/08/97

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson
Astrologer, Carroll
Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) By making a new plan of action today you can put into effect those changes which have been on your mind and need to be implemented. Be more thoughtful of your mate later this evening by doing something special for him or her.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Try to be more time efficient in the days ahead by planning a schedule today and sticking to it. You should not allow anyone to sway your opinions for career activities you have, thereby you can be quite successful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Join forces with an important acquaintance today who can assist you to become better organized in your career activities. This should be a very memorable evening by planning something special for your mate which he or she will appreciate.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Pay special attention today to matters involving your health and thereby you can be successful in your career activities. You can find some good financial opportunities in the newspaper, so keep your eyes open.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You have some free time today, so use it constructively by planning your schedule for the days ahead. Be happy with your mate tonight and show him or her much affection by doing something special which will be appreciated.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your activities should be centered at home today, try to be helpful to your loved ones. Go out on the town for recreational entertainment later this evening with your loved ones and have an enjoyable time together.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It would be wise to stay at home later this evening, so invite some interesting friends into your abode and have a charming night together. This is a good time for you to meet with a bigwig and discuss becoming successful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Study your property and figure out how you can best improve it with the assistance of knowledgeable persons. Make a plan for this later evening. Try to improve the condition of your budget so that you will have extra funds.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You may come across a plan for expanding your business interests today, however, you should not get in over your head. Meet with some close friends later this evening for some fun recreational activities which are enjoyable.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you have a new project in mind today, discuss it only with those people you can trust. You should not be secretive with your mate, or you could discover that a difference of opinion could exist.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can make some progress today at attaining a personal wish if you set your mind on it and follow through to its conclusion. Try to be more helpful to your mate later this evening and he or she will be quite appreciative.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) To avoid any last minute overights today, a trip should be planned to deal with any unforeseen obstacles which could exist. Look to a good friend later this evening for an important favour you need and which could be beneficial.

Birthingstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Higher cement prices seen raising construction costs between two and ten per cent

**** KHALED BOURINI**, president of the engineering offices, expects the recent increase in the price of cement will lead to higher prices of tens of building materials and products in which cement is added as a main input in them such as bricks and tiles and cement pipes.

Noting that the decision to raise the price of cement would negatively affect the real estate investment, especially in light of the current economic slowdown and the decline in development areas, Mr. Bourini indicated that the 10 per cent price increase is considered a sharp hike for a product such as cement. "This will reflect on construction costs in the Kingdom rising by between two and ten per cent according to the quality of buildings," he pointed out.

"As such, it is clear that the fixed, low and medium-income groups will be the most harmed of this decision," Mr. Bourini said noting that high-income groups would be affected by no more than two per cent of the increase. He explained that the benefit to the treasury from higher cement prices would not be more than JD18 million on the assumption that the whole 3.5 million tonnes produced for the local market is fully sold. He highlighted the fact that prices of cement for export, although "reasonable," were not increased.

Contracting sources said the new cement prices would have an effect on the private sector contractors as contractors engaged in public sector projects are protected by a contract clause that entitles them for compensation.

Mohammed Khair Kilani, president of the society of investors in the housing sector, said the increase has been expected for some time as he had read in an Arabic newspaper that prices of cement in Jordan should be raised as a condition to extend a loan to the cement company to boost its production. He reiterated what he said at the second evaluation seminar of the housing sector in Jordan that "it is important to harmonise the requirements of the lenders and the company on the one hand and the market and economic conditions on the other."

Noting that the decision carries heavy negative consequences on the contracting sector, Mr. Kilani blasted the move to raise cement prices as at least having been wrongly timed and that it should have been taken in a positive economic climate for the sector. He stressed that decisions should be taken with much care to facilitate and encourage investment. Mr. Kilani concluded by describing the move to have been taken in a non-encouraging economic situation and, as a result, "would lead to a climate that discourages investment and creates an additional difficulty to large groups of people not being able to own a suitable home" (Al Aswaj).

Ailing Gulf Air to get \$200m in rescue loan

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Gulf Air's government owners have agreed to pump \$200 million into the coffers of the debt-ridden carrier to allow it to overcome its financial crisis, the company's president has said.

Sheikh Ahmad Ben Saif Al Nahyan said the board of the four-nation company endorsed the injection of funds at its meeting in Doha.

"The resolution included material support by granting the company a loan of \$200 million," he said in a statement in Abu Dhabi.

"The board decisions reflect the support by the owner states and their keen interest to develop the activities of the company and boost its ambitious plans to continue as a major competitor in the aviation industry," he added.

The shareholders—Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Abu Dhabi—agreed on the interest-free loan after several meetings in a bid to rescue the company from collapse following accumulating losses caused by growing competition and debts.

The Manama-based Gulf Air suffered from losses of around \$159 million in 1995, its worst year since the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

The loss was slashed to around \$30 million in 1996 after the company reduced uneconomical routes and staff as part of cost-cutting measures, and was expected to fall further to \$12 million in 1997.

Gulf Air sources said the \$200 million grant would enable the company to further bring down losses and pave the way for the proposed increase in the capital, from 150 million Bahraini dinars (\$398 million) to 250 million dinars (\$663 million).

Gulf Air's debt is estimated at around \$2.3 billion, which were accumulated from the purchase of new aircraft as part of expansion plans.

"We assure our customers that the company is back in business with renewed strength and a determination to provide the highest levels of service," said Sheikh Ahmad, also chairman of the Abu Dhabi Civil Aviation Department.

He said Gulf Air boosted its operating income by around five per cent to 17 million dinars (\$44.2 million) in 1996 despite a reduction in the fleet and the closure of unprofitable routes.

The company also managed to slash operating expenses by 22 million dinars (\$57.2 million) in 1996 despite an increase in fuel prices.

"As a result, the operational loss was cut by around 59 per cent to 25.2 million dinars (\$65.5 million) in 1996 from 61.9 million dinars (\$160.9 million) in 1995," Sheikh Ahmad said. "Gulf Air is steadily moving forward in the right direction with the support of the owner states."

Businessmen, economist propose solutions to difficult economic conditions in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Businessmen's Association (JBA) Saturday urged the government to exert pressure on the Israeli government to allow more Jordanian goods to reach Palestinian markets.

This, it affirmed, might ease the current economic recession in Jordan.

JBA member, Wael Ghneim, stated that the government should insist that a minimum of 25 to 30 per cent of Palestinian markets, worth an estimated \$800 million, should be open to Jordanian products.

Jordanian goods are very much in demand in the Palestinian territories, he added.

Israel remains the obstacle in the way of Jordanian trade with the Palestinians and if impediments are removed, Jordanian industry can begin to recover, Mr. Ghneim asserted.

ed.

He also called on money-lending institutions in Jordan to give loans with flexible options to Jordanian industries and reexamine laws and regulations adopted by the government-sponsored Industrial Development Bank in order to allocate more credit facilities to Jordanian industries.

He said that loan restrictions imposed by banks have led to a reduction of production operations, forcing some industries to reduce their activities and lay off workers.

Taber Al Taher, member of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, said the government ought to give more attention to strengthening Jordan's relations with other Arab states and must open the door for more trade links with Iraq.

He said that Jordan has suffered a great deal as a result of the U.N. embargo on Iraq and everything possible should be made to promote bilateral trade to save the Jordanian economy.

Former labour minister and economist Tayseer Abdul Jabbar said recession and unemployment are closely linked and that the government has the power to address the situation.

He pointed out that the government can help ease the present difficult situation by promoting investments and opening more foreign markets for Jordanian goods, training Jordanian workers through the Vocational Training Corporation to take up jobs currently filled by guest workers and by encouraging the unemployed to start small businesses of their own.

Kuwaiti banks lift 1996 profits

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — High oil prices and a buoyant economy boosted profits of Kuwaiti banks in 1996, but bankers will have to work harder in 1997 to achieve a repeat performance, analysts have said.

All the local banks which have released results so far increased profits in 1996 with the biggest institution National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reporting a nine per cent rise in earnings to 71.3 million dinars (\$235 million).

NBK dominates the market with assets of 3.92 billion dinars (\$12.9 billion), more than double its nearest rival, but it was not alone in raising earnings. The Gulf Bank, the second largest commercial bank, increased profits by more than 20 per cent to 31.3 million dinars (\$103 million), while Commercial Bank of Kuwait and the only Islamic bank Kuwait Finance House also performed well.

Last year was a "buoyant" year for all institutions, said Goufried Bruder, chief

general manager and chief executive officer of Alahli Bank of Kuwait.

"It will be difficult for the banking community to maintain that (level of growth) in 1997," said Mr. Bruder, whose own bank reported a 47 per cent rise in profits albeit from a low base to 6.3 million dinars (\$21 million).

Three more banks have yet to report their annual results.

Profits were boosted last year by opportunities generated by a more confident private sector and a booming stock market spurred on by high oil prices, analysts said.

Many banks expanded their loans portfolios by lending to customers to invest in local shares, called margin lending, but shares are not expected to perform so well this year leaving fewer opportunities for banks.

"I don't think banks will be increasing their consumer loan or margin loan portfolios as they did," commented one financial analyst.

Last year also witnessed a landmark project finance deal worth \$1.2 billion for a new petrochemicals complex being built in Kuwait, for which local commercial banks underwrote some \$500 million.

Analysts see further opportunities in the downstream oil sector in the future, but these opportunities are also unlikely to materialise in 1997.

In addition, oil prices are expected to tail off this year after the highs of 1996, although economists said the effects of any decline in prices is likely to take some time to filter through and dampen economic activity.

But even if local banks have to work harder this year, analysts said they are in better financial shape after a government repayment programme began last year that is finally bringing to an end a bad debts saga that has weighed heavily on their balance sheets since a massive stock market crash in 1982.

Uncertainty weighs heavily on Japanese banks

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese banks are likely to continue underperforming on the stock market over the next 12 months with uncertainty remaining over the impact of planned financial deregulation, analysts said.

Even though most banks are through the worst of their write-offs, it is likely to take time before they regain international competitiveness after the reforms, known as the "Tokyo big bang" and expected to be implemented by 2001.

The government's position on forcing leading banks to help bail out weaker ones also remains unclear, adding to investor reluctance to resume buying the sector, the analysts told AFX-Asia, an AFP-affiliated financial news service.

One of the few to have upgraded Japanese banks is Lehman Bros. analyst

Nozomu Kunishige, who has revised his recommendation from "underweight" to "neutral" on the view that the downside risk is considerably less than several months ago when fears of a financial crisis were strongest.

"Any short-term rally is likely to come from news that lead to an improvement in asset quality, even if the March 31 announcement of the mortgage securitisation package was slightly disappointing," Mr. Kunishige said.

But other analysts remain cautious about the likely impact of deregulation, particularly on the competitiveness of existing sector leaders.

Signs that the finance ministry, for example, may allow more banks to issue debentures — currently the exclusive preserve of Japan's long-term credit banks — have led to sus-

tained falls in the shares of Industrial Bank of Japan Ltd. (IBJ) and Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan Ltd. (LTCB) in recent weeks.

Japan's 20 leading banks wrote off bad debts of more than 21 trillion yen (\$166 billion) in the five years to March last year. The 10 commercial banks, seven trust banks and three long-term credit banks are expected to write off another five trillion yen in the latest year.

Write-offs and emerging concerns over the impact of deregulation resulted in the banking sector's index falling 29.8 per cent in the 12 months to March, almost twice the 15.9 per cent decline in the Nikkei stock average.

In the year to March, IBJ was the sixth largest decliner on the Tokyo Stock Exchange's first section with its share price dropping 55.6 per cent. That

compared with average gains of 23.5 per cent for shares in precision equipment companies, far ahead of banks in internationalising their operations.

Yamaichi Research Institute analyst Hidechiro Nishimura said that although bad-debt resolution was progressing steadily, "we will maintain our 'bearish' outlook for banks until a more drastic bail-out scheme for failed banks, including the use of public funds, is worked out by the government."

Analysts said the separate April 1 announcements of restructuring plans by Nippon Credit Bank Ltd. and a merger between Hokkaido Takushoku Bank Ltd. and Hokkaido Bank Ltd. showed that the government still adopted a case-by-case attitude and lacked a clear strategy in handling troubled banks.

"Until this issue is

resolved, fears over a chain bankruptcy in the banking industry will not fade away, so their share prices will continue to underperform, probably for another 12 months or so," Mr. Nishimura said.

Eisuke Sakakibara, director general of the International Finance Bureau at the finance ministry, said recently that his ministry would no longer employ a "too-big-to-fail" policy when proceeding with financial reform.

Bank stocks are also likely to be undermined by liquidation of cross-shareholdings and the continued decline in asset values.

"Whether banks will be able to emerge as comparative outperformers against other sectors will depend largely on whether land and share prices will stop falling in a way which will facilitate the liquidation of mortgaged properties," said

Katsuhito Sasajima, analyst at Nikko Research Centre.

Without a recovery in asset values, "any rebound will prove to be short-lived for some time," Mr. Sasajima said.

Standard and Poor's associate director Yasuhide Yahiro said the rating agency was maintaining its negative outlook towards Japanese banks, seeing the big bang cutting profitability as competition becomes more fierce.

Banks, which recently cut their profit forecasts, have generally set aside extra provisions in light of the sustained decline in Japanese land prices.

Yamaichi estimates that the fall in land prices has boosted the combined value of bad debts of the leading 20 banks by nearly 38 trillion yen since Japan's economic "bubble" burst in the early 1990s.

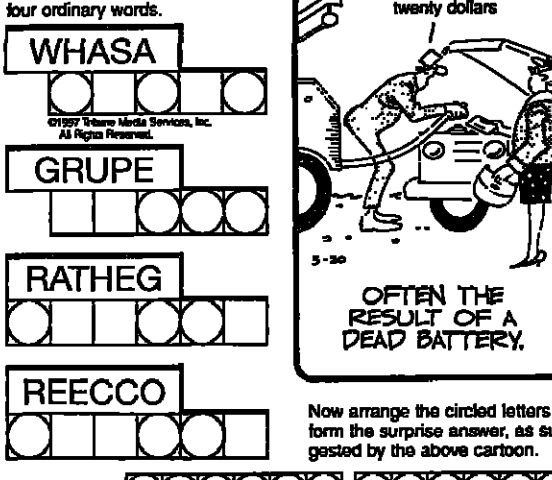
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"If an asteroid collides with Earth, it might not be so bad. There's a one-in-40-billion chance it will land on my boss."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: RAVEN STAD COMPLY FUTILE
Answer: No basketball team would be complete without this — FIVE PLAYERS

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Krajicek and Roux through to final of Japan Open

TOKYO (R) — Top seed Richard Krajicek and outsider Lionel Roux won hard fought victories on Saturday to earn places in the men's singles final of the \$1.22 million Japan Open.

A ruffled Krajicek said his 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 victory over Australian Patrick Rafter had been a struggle against an improved rafter service.

"I really had a tough time today. I remember the last time I played him I broke him four or five times. This time I only broke him once," the world number six said. "Except for the tiebreak I didn't really think I was getting on to his serve. I wasn't reading it well and he was mixing it up very well," Krajicek added.

The 25-year-old from Rotterdam, who broke Rafter's serve at 4-3 in the second set, had to fight hard against an opponent who shares a similar style of powerful serve and volley play. "I think we have a similar game and this may sound a bit arrogant but I think I play it better than he does... My only strategy was to try to pass him and look for the backhand," Krajicek said.

In Saturday's second men's singles semifinal, 16th seeded Frenchman Lionel Roux beat fifth seed Thomas Johansson 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 in an acerbic and grueling baseline match. "If Krajicek is serving at his best it will be very difficult. But in every match there is a chance to break the serve of even the best server," Roux said.

In the last women's semifinal match, fourth seeded local favourite Ai Sugiyama knocked out second seed American Kimberly Po 5-7, 6-4, 6-1.

Sugiyama said Po's precise baseline style had spurred her on to produce winners.

"I wait until I'm under pressure for the winners to come out. For that I have Po



Lionel Roux of France drops his shadow on the centre court as he returns a shot to Thomas Johansson of Sweden during the men's singles semifinal of the \$1.22 million Japan Open tennis tournament. Roux beat Johansson 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 to meet Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands in the final (Reuters photo)

to thank," she said.

Po said she was less in control than the two previous times the pair have faced each other. "Ai was a little more aggressive today, definitely dictating more of

the points than I would have liked. I think I made too many errors today but I just noticed her shots were more angled than the previous times we've played and she returned a lot better today," she said.

Sugiyama goes on to play Po's close friend and top seed Amy Frazier in the women's singles at Ariake Tennis Park near Tokyo Bay on Sunday.

1st Division Basketball Championship

Ahli hands reigns to Cholukian as former champs meet Hussein

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's premier basketball competition enters its second week Sunday with three matches scheduled in Amman and Irbid.

Al Yarmouk have failed to show up at all their matches so far and opponents Al Jazireh will therefore win by default and have the day off.

While the two other matches are not competitive and are relatively easy, the one in Amman has more importance since it will be a chance for former champions Al Ahli to regroup and display cohesion and teamwork as serious contenders when they face Al Hussein who are back in the First Division after an absence of two seasons.

After Al Ahli suffered an 85-57 humiliating defeat to Al Jazireh last Tuesday, the clubs' management handed new coach Rafi Cholukian the reins following an extraordinary board meeting in which they discussed the team's

surprising disappointing form.

During their match with Al Jazireh, Ghaith Najjar, Al Ahli's coach for the past two seasons, was seen coaching the team and instructing players during time-outs while Cholukian, a former head coach of the Soviet Unions' national teams was merely watching although he had been recruited for the purpose of taking over the clubs' teams with the hope of taking Al Ahli to new heights after they failed to win the title during the past two seasons.

Al Ahli were previously trained by Ukrainian Alexander Sacha who

guided the team to a 1990 win ending Al Orthodoxy's 1976-1989 reign atop the Kingdom's basketball scene.

Al Ahli went on to win the crown in 1992, 93, 94 before Sacha left his post after apparent differences with the board.

Najjar took over the team during the past two years but the team was unable to reclaim the title and have been in a slump since.

Concurrently one of the teams leading stars Naser Bushnaq also left the team and veteran players Marwan Ma'touq and Yousef Zaghloul followed suit last year.

In Sunday's other match, Al Orthodoxy face Al Jalil who beat Al Hussein 79-40 in their latest match.

Al Jalil are not in their best form as some of the teams best players are off the lineup following internal differences while Al Orthodoxy appear well prepared hoping to win the title for the third consecutive year.

Despite their limited ability to challenge Al Jazireh, Orthodoxy and Ahli, Al Jalil and Al Hussein are playing the season with an offhand approach since only the last placed team — Al Yarmouk — will be relegated.

Standings

Team	R	W	L	SE	SA	Pts
Jazireh	2	2	-	199	82	4
Jalil	2	1	1	104	154	3
Orthodoxy	1	1	-	95	56	2
Hussein	2	-	2	96	174	2
Ahli	1	-	1	57	85	1
*Yarmouk	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Relegated to 2nd Division

Klinsmann confirms Parma interest

MUNICH (R) — Juergen Klinsmann confirmed on Friday Italy's Parma had inquired about his availability but said nothing was sealed and he would not decide on his future until the end of the season.

"There haven't been any negotiations," the Bayern Munich striker said. "Parma are waiting for a sign from me. But I can't make a decision until the season is over."

Klinsmann has announced he will take advantage of a clause in his contract to leave Bayern at the end of the season.

But the Germany captain, who became a father last week, said there were more important things to think about at the moment such as his new family and success at his current club.

Bayern, the Bundesliga leaders, face champions Borussia Dortmund on Saturday in a match which could go a long way to deciding the fate of this season's title.

"I really want to win the German championship," said Klinsmann, who has never won a national league title in an otherwise glittering career which has taken him to Internazionale of Milan, Monaco and Tottenham Hotspur.



Fifteen-year-old Kristy Ellem of Australia swims to win the 200m breaststroke at the world short-course swimming championships. The win gave Australia their fourth title in the championship (Reuters photo)

Olympic champion Pankratov dips out again

GOTHENBURG, Sweden (R) — Double Olympic champion Denis Pankratov capped a disappointing week at the world short-course swimming championships when he failed to make his second final on Saturday.

The Russian, who holds all the men's short-course and long-course butterfly records, led for the first 50 metres of his 200 butterfly heat but was then passed by defending champion Scott Goodman of Australia and Germany's Thomas Ruppert.

Pankratov, who did not manage a place in the 100 butterfly final on Thursday, could not respond to the challenge and finished one place and 0.31 seconds behind Ruppert, the eighth and slowest overall qualifier for the evening's finals.

The blond Russian, swimming without his customary black cap, clocked one minute 58.22 seconds, more than five seconds outside the 1:52.64 world mark he set in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, in February.

He did not seem unduly concerned about the outcome and appears to be concentrating his season on next August's European long-course championships in Seville, for which he will compete in Russian trials in May.

Most of the Russian team came to Sweden direct from France where they had trained for seven weeks, including four weeks at high altitude in the Pyrenees.

American Misty Hyman gave fans in the Scandinavia arena a display of her remarkable underwater technique and came close to the world record in the women's 100 butterfly heats.

Hyman turned on her side after diving in at the start and swam almost all the first length of the 25-metre pool under water, emerging only for one obligatory stroke above the surface before the turn.

The American emerged for five strokes on the second length, six on the third and seven on the fourth and touched in a championship record 58.32.

Hyman, bronze medalist in the 200 butterfly and 100 backstroke at these championships, set a world mark of

58.29 last December but that was lowered to 58.24 on March 28 by Japan's Ayari Aoyama.

Claudia Poll, who broke her own 200 freestyle world mark on Friday, faced a battle against 15-year-old Australian Natasha Bowron in the final of the women's 400 freestyle.

Bowron, gold medalist in Friday's 800 freestyle, led qualifiers in four minutes 3.72 seconds to sound her challenge to the Costa Rican defending champion and world record-holder.

Poll, who won the Olympic 200 freestyle title in Atlanta, won her heat in the second-best overall time of 4:08.93.

American Amanda Beard, double breaststroke Olympic silver medalist, failed to make the women's 100 breaststroke final, finishing ninth overall nearly a second outside a final place in 1:09.72.

South Africa's Joanne Russell led the women's 100 breaststroke qualifiers in 1:08.14 and Russia's Andrei Korneev topped the men's 200 breaststroke qualifiers in 2:09.82.

Berlusconi backs Sacchi

TURIN (AFP) — AC Milan President Silvio Berlusconi threw his support behind Arrigo Sacchi on Saturday, ruling out all chance of him sacking the team's embattled coach.

Italy's reigning champions have scored two goals and conceded nine in their last two games and slumped to 12th in the Serie A table — just two places above relegation.

"I've never sacked anybody," Berlusconi said in answer to reporters' questions here.

Sacchi took over in December from Uruguayan Oscar Tabarez, who resigned because of the team's poor results — which have since worsened under the former national coach.



Morocco's Karim Alami returns a backhand to Spain's Albert Portas during their quarter-finals singles match in the Barcelona Open men's tennis tournament April 18. Portas beat Alami 6-2, 7-5 to advance to the semi-finals (Reuters photo)

Maradona contract signing delayed

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Unpredictable former triple South American footballer of the year Diego Maradona postponed the signing of a contract with league side Boca Juniors here on Friday because apparently he could not rearrange his schedule.

Ivan Pasloski, spokesman for Boca Juniors President Mauricio Macri, said that it was impossible for Maradona to change his appointments

on Friday so that the contract would be signed on Tuesday, April 22, while Guillermo Coppola, Maradona's manager, was not available for comment.

If and when the Argentinian star signs he has said he will need between 15 and 20 days to return to a proper level of fitness — meaning he would be ready to play either against Independiente on May 4 or Gimnasia y Esgrima on May 11.

Among the conditions set out in the

contract are that Maradona, who inspired Argentina to the 1986 World Cup triumph and the 1990 final defeat by Germany, undergo a full medical by Boca's doctors particularly as he had to be taken to hospital last week suffering from hypertension while appearing on a Chilean talkshow.

He also has to stop any activities that would affect his physical and mental well-being, particularly his ongoing battle with recreational drugs

such as cocaine — which he admitted on February 28 was a never-ending struggle.

Maradona, who was sent home from the 1994 World Cup finals in disgrace after testing positive to drugs, had said on April 1 that he would not sign with Boca because of contractual difficulties with his own kit sponsor and the company that sponsored the team's strip.

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METRO
Shows: 3:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30
THE HUNCHBACK OF
NOTREDAME
Show: 5:00 p.m.

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Steven Segal...in
GLIMMER MAN
Sylvester Stallone ...in COBRA
Michael Jordan...in SPACE JAM
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Vina grand slam sparks Brewers to rout of Indians

CLEVELAND (R) — Fernando Vina belted his first career grand slam and Ben McDonald pitched seven scoreless innings to lead the Milwaukee Brewers to a 10-2 rout of the struggling Cleveland Indians on Friday.

Vina's grand slam in the fourth inning off starter Jack McDowell (0-2) extended Milwaukee's lead to 7-0. He added a sacrifice fly for his fifth RBI of the game in the seventh.

McDonald (2-1) limited Cleveland to two hits with a walk and five strikeouts. He retired 12 straight and 19 of the final 20 batters he faced despite difficult near freezing playing conditions.

"I think that was one of the coldest games I've ever pitched in. The cold just bites right through you," McDonald said. "The guys went out early and scored some runs for me and that's always a plus."

The Brewers have won three in a row and eight of their last 10 games. They lead the league with a 2.72 ERA.

In Chicago, Bernie Williams doubled and drove in four and Tino Martinez added a home run and two RBIs as the New York Yankees snapped a five-game losing streak with a 10-4 rout of the



Colorado Rockies shortstop Walt Weiss leaps over Atlanta Braves Mike Mordecai at second base in the fifth inning in Denver. Weiss successfully turned the double play to end the inning. The Braves won 14-0 (Reuters photo)

White Sox.

The Yankees opened the game with four straight singles against White Sox starter Jamie Navarro (1-1) to spark a five-run first inning.

The Yankees tacked on two more in the second on an RBI single by Williams and a sacrifice fly by Martinez. Williams added a two-run double in the third for a 9-0 lead.

Chicago scored all of its runs in the fifth against Yankee starter Ramiro Mendoza (1-1), who allowed four runs and seven hits over five innings.

At Texas, Roger Pavlik tied an American League record by walking the first four batters of the game and Ed Sprague followed with a two-run double as the Toronto Blue Jays raced to an early 5-0 lead and held off the Texas Rangers, 6-5.

Al Cy Young award win-

ner Pat Hentgen (1-1) allowed four runs and eight hits in 6 2/3 innings, walking one and striking out five for the win.

Orlando Merced's solo homer in the seventh to extended Toronto's lead to 6-2. The Blue Jays needed the cushion after Mike Simuns led off the seventh with a homer. Benji Gil added an RBI single and Dean Palmer homered in the eighth for Texas.

In Detroit, pinch-hitter Dave Magadan's RBI single sparked a six-run eighth-inning as the Oakland Athletics ended a four-game losing streak with a 9-5 win over the Tigers.

Oakland starter Dave Telgheder gave up five runs and eight hits over 5 1/3 innings. But reliever Buddy Groom (1-1) pitched a scoreless inning for the win.

Mike Myers (0-1) put two runners on base before

Magadan singled to centre field, scoring Scott Brosius and cutting the deficit to 5-4. Todd Jones relieved Myers and walked three straight batters as the A's scored five more runs in the inning.

In Seattle, Roberto Kelly's three-run double highlighted a five-run fifth inning as the Minnesota Twins pounded the Mariners, 10-3.

With the game tied 1-1, Seattle starter Scott Sanders (0-4) surrendered a two-run homer to Rob Becker, sparking a five-run fifth as Sanders became baseball's first four-game loser this season.

Greg added a three-run homer in the sixth as Minnesota built a 10-1 lead after six innings.

Frankie Rodriguez (1-2) got the win despite giving up solo home runs to Jay Buhner and Paul Sorrento in the seventh.

Group 3 World Cup qualifiers Jordan scores crucial 4-1 win over Bahrain

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S NATIONAL soccer team Saturday scored their first win in the World Cup qualifiers by beating Bahrain 4-1 as the second leg/first round Group 3 matches got underway in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The win gave Jordan the group lead for now, as they tied the UAE in overall points and lead on goal difference.

In order to clinch the only qualifying berth from Group 3 Jordan will now have to beat the UAE provided the UAE draw or lose to Bahrain.

Badran Al Shaqran opened scoring for Jordan after following through a shot by Jiryes Tadros in the 15th minute.

Hassounah Sheikh made it 3-0 after receiving a perfect pass inside the penalty box in the 34th minute.

Bahrain scored their sole goal from an unexpected long shot that went over goalie Mohammad Abu Daoud in the 44th minute.

Jordan's Hassounah Sheikh and teammates lost a series of easy chances in both halves and the score remained unchanged until the final two minutes of the match.

Bassam Khatib added Jordan's third goal from a header in the 90th minute while Jiryes Tadros scored the last goal from a beautiful shot from well outside the box that went through Bahraini defenders to seal the Kingdom's crucial win.

Jordan's chance of securing the only qualifying berth from the group became difficult after failing to win in the first leg which was held in Manama, Bahrain.

Jordan drew 0-0 with the UAE who beat Bahrain 2-1. Bahrain kept their qualifying chances alive after defeating Jordan 1-0.

The Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) had evaluated the Kingdom's results and described as satisfactory their goalless draw with the UAE in the opening match — a good result against a 1990 World Cup qualifier and currently Asia's second ranked team.

However, the team was in its worst form in their 1-0 loss to Bahrain.

Onlookers had criticised the team for not being able to score in both their matches.

Even in eight friendly internationals in preparation for the qualifiers, Jordan could only score 6 goals altogether. Jordan's record included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat.

Jordan had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 and drawing 0-0.

In matches against Iraq, Jordan twice lost 1-0 while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

This is the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and USA 94.

Thirty-six Asian countries are contesting the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round, to be held in Singapore, where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

Jordan's 31-member delegation includes nine officials alongside the lineup including Mu'taz Rishet, Yousef Ammouri, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shananeh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nari Yada, Jiryes Tadros and Badran Shaqran, Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khatib, Abdullah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammud and Hassounah Sheikh.

JTV coverage of Group 3 matches

UAE — Bahrain April 22 6:30 p.m.

UAE — Jordan April 26 6:30 p.m.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	Pts
Jordan	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
UAE	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Bahrain	3	1	2	0	3	6	3

Braves pound Rockies 14-0

DENVER (R) — Tom Glavine scattered eight singles for his second shutout at Coors field and the Atlanta Braves pounded out 23 hits en route to a 14-0 drubbing of the Colorado Rockies on Friday.

Glavine is the only pitcher with more than one shutout at home run friendly Coors field, where only six have been thrown since the ballpark opened in 1995.

"It's something to throw a shutout in this park, not too many guys do it," Atlanta manager Bobby Cox said after his team recorded its sixth consecutive victory. "He was strong from the first inning on."

Kenny Lofton had his second five-hit game of the season for Atlanta, including a solo homer in the fifth off Mike Munoz. Lofton had four runs scored and two RBIs for the game.

"He's had 20-some hits in the last six games," Cox said. "Kenny's got a chance to hit anywhere from 300 to 380, he's that good."

Fred McGriff had four hits and four RBIs, while Michael Tucker went 3-for-5 with three RBIs and two runs scored for Atlanta.

The Rockies were limited to eight singles and grounded into a team-record five double plays.

Colorado starter Jamey Wright was lifted with no outs in the third inning as the Braves touched him for eight runs and 10 hits. Munoz surrendered three runs and six hits in three innings of relief.

In San Francisco, Glennallen Hill drilled a two-run double and Jeff Kent followed with an RBI single as the red-hot giants scored three runs in the ninth for a 5-4 win over the Florida Marlins.

Florida closer Robb Nen (1-1) started the ninth with a 4-2 lead, but promptly loaded the bases before Hill ripped a 2-2 pitch off the wall in centre field to tie the game.

After Barry Bonds was intentionally walked, Kent lined a 1-2 pitch just out of the reach of shortstop Edgar Renteria to seal the

Giants' seventh straight win.

Doug Henry (1-0) got the final two outs of the ninth for the victory.

In Pittsburgh, two-sport star Deion Sanders went 3-for-4 with an inside-the-park home run and Dave Burba allowed one run over six innings as the Cincinnati Reds stopped a four-game slide with a 6-1 victory over the Pirates.

Burba (3-1) allowed four hits, walked four and tied a career high with 11 strikeouts.

The Reds scratched out single runs in the second, third and fourth innings and added three in the ninth on just one hit with the help of two wild pitches by Jeff Granger and a passed ball by Keith Osik.

Kevin Elster's solo homer accounted for Pittsburgh's run.

In Los Angeles, Mike Piazza hit a three-run homer and Ramon Martinez allowed one earned run over 6 1/3 innings as the Dodgers beat the Houston Astros 5-3.

Piazza hit his second homer of the season in the fifth against Astros starter Mike Hampton (1-3) as the Dodgers erased a 2-1 deficit.

Martinez (2-1) allowing two runs — one earned — and eight hits with three walks and seven strikeouts to lower his ERA to 2.31. Hampton surrendered five runs and nine hits in 5-2/3 innings for the loss.

In Philadelphia, Calvin Maduro picked up his first Major League win and Rico Brogna drove in three runs with a pair of doubles as the Phillies snapped a five-game losing skid with an 8-3 win over the Montreal Expos.

Maduro (1-2) pitched 7 2/3 innings, allowing three runs and six hits while striking out three for the win.

Jim Bullinger (0-3) took the loss, allowing five runs — three earned — over 4 1/3 innings as the Expos lost for the seventh time in their last nine games.

Bayern and Dortmund fight out 1-1 draw

DORTMUND (R) — Bayern Munich drew 1-1 away to champions Borussia Dortmund on Saturday to extend their lead at the top of the Bundesliga to six points.

A bullet header from Karlheinz Riedle gave Dortmund the lead after Andy Moeller floated in a perfectly weighed free kick in the second minute.

But Bayern were level just a minute later when Ruggiero Rizzitelli headed home a cross from Alexander Zickler.

The draw left Bayern six points clear of Dortmund, who moved into second place.

But third-placed Bayer Leverkusen could cut Bayern's lead to three points with a win over VfB Stuttgart on Sunday.

UEFA Cup semifinalists Schalke lost 1-0 away to Hamburg while Bochum defended their fifth place with a 1-0 win over 1860 Munich.

United closer to fourth title in 5 years after beating Liverpool

LIVERPOOL (R) — Manchester United moved to within seven points of the English Premier League title and effectively ended Liverpool's challenge when they deservedly beat their arch-rivals 3-1 at Anfield on Saturday.

The clash between the top two teams in the table saw United dominate a Liverpool side who defended abysmally and were undermined by another woeful display from out-of-form goalkeeper David James, who gifted United their third goal which made the game safe for the defending champions.

All four goals came from headers with Gary Pallister scoring twice for United and Andy Cole adding the other. John Barnes briefly gave Liverpool some hope with a rare header which cancelled out Pallister's opener.

The victory moved United to 69 points with four matches remaining. Liverpool have 64 points with three matches to play, while Arsenal will move on to 66 points with four games left if they beat Blackburn later on Saturday.

Despite the comprehensive nature of the victory,

United manager Alex Ferguson was taking nothing for granted afterwards.

"It was a massive result for us, very big win, a very important victory. Although we have three home matches left, we still have a lot to do."

"To be champions you have to come here where they know a lot about title-winning sides and do well. I think if we win the title we will deserve it, but nothing is settled yet."

Pallister, who set United on the way to victory with the opening goal after 13 minutes, then scored again to put them 2-1 up three minutes before the break and was delighted with the result.

"That's the first time I have ever scored two goals in a match," he said. "And it was the perfect time to do it. We haven't won the title yet, and Arsenal are still in there, but this was an important win."

Liverpool manager Roy Evans said: "We won't throw the towel in and say it's all over, but it's a very tall order for us now. We still have to be positive and get our heads up because second place is very important for the (European Cup)

Champions' League next season. But we are desperately disappointed."

Former Liverpool captain Emlyn Hughes, who captained the club to championship and European Cup success in the 1970s, did not mince his words.

"That's it for Liverpool, they can't win the title now," he said. "They had to win this one to stand any chance and that chance has gone now."

United, who had won only once in the league at Anfield in the last nine seasons, were put on the way to their biggest away victory over Liverpool since 1969 when Pallister, unmarked at a David Beckham corner, powerfully headed home from close range.

Barnes equalised in the 19th minute when he directed his header from a Stig Inge Bjornebye corner wide of Peter Schmeichel. The Danish goalkeeper got his hand to the ball but could not stop it going in.

Pallister restored United's lead with another header from a corner after he had been left unmarked again. His goal came just seconds after James had made his best save of the match from Ronnie Johnson, who also

had a clear header from a corner.

James, who nervously came for balls when he should have remained on his line, and stayed when he should have come out, gifted United their third in the 63rd minute.

He completely missed a cross from Gary Neville, leaving Cole to direct an unchallenged header into the empty net to make it 3-1.

Eric Cantona and Cole twice — once in the last minute when he had a great chance to make it 4-1 — went close to increasing the victory margin.

United will meet Borussia Dortmund in the second leg of the European Cup semifinal at Old Trafford on Wednesday in a far happier frame of mind than Liverpool will be when they play Paris St. Germain in the return of their Cup Winners' Cup semifinal at Anfield on Thursday.

Both sides are going into those games behind on aggregate, but while United look to have a fair chance of overturning their 1-0 first-leg deficit, Liverpool will have to show a huge improvement to overturn their 3-0 first-leg loss.

Knicks secure home court advantage for 1st round

NEW YORK (R) — Patrick Ewing had yet another big game for the Knicks on Friday, helping New York to nail down home court advantage in the first round of the playoffs and hold onto third place in the Eastern Conference.

Ewing scored 26 points and pulled down 14 rebounds to lead the Knicks to a 97-89 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

New York's victory, coupled with a Charlotte loss, ensured that the Knicks can finish no worse than fourth in the East.

The Knicks can clinch third place with a win at Chicago, a victory that will keep them from running into the Bulls no sooner than the conference finals.

In Detroit, Terrell Brandon had 23 points and seven assists for the Cleveland Cavaliers, who stayed in contention for the final playoff spot

in the East with an 82-75 victory over the Pistons.

Bob Sura added 16 points for the Cavaliers, who can nail down a playoff berth with a win over Washington Sunday. The winner of that game earns the unenviable right to face the Chicago Bulls in the first round of the playoffs.

At Washington, Rod Strickland scored 27 points and handed out nine assists as the Bullets moved within one win of their first playoff spot in nine years with a 104-93 triumph over the Orlando Magic.

Juwan Howard added 25 points for the Bullets, who have won 15 of their last 20 games but must beat Cleveland in their final game Sunday to qualify for post-season.

In Los Angeles, Elden Campbell had 21 points and Shaquille O'Neal added 18 — but just one in the second half — as the Lakers beat the

Clippers 123-95.

Nick Van Exel had 15 points and 10 assists for the Lakers, who moved back into a tie with the Seattle first place in the Pacific Division at 56-25.

Rodney Rogers and Eric Piatkowski scored 15 points apiece for the Clippers, who own the final playoff spot in the West and a date with the Utah Jazz in the first round.

In Charlotte, Damon Stoudamire scored 28 points as the Toronto Raptors snapped the Hornets' team-record nine-game winning streak with a 108-100 victory.

In Houston, Charles Barkley had seven points and two assists in overtime as the Rockets rallied to defeat the Dallas Mavericks 112-102.

In San Antonio, Cedric Ceballos scored 22 points off the bench and

Rex Chapman had 21 and seven assists as the Phoenix Suns overcame a 16-point first-half deficit to post a 106-95 victory over the Spurs.

Kevin Johnson added 11 points and 16 assists for the Suns, who took the lead with an 11-0 third-quarter surge and put the game away by opening the fourth on a 10-0 run to stay tied for sixth place in the West with Minnesota.

In Minnesota, Tom Gugliotta scored 22 points and Dean Garrett had 18 points and eight rebounds as the Timberwolves posted their best offensive effort of the season in a 122-112 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Kevin Garnett also scored 18 points, while Stephon Marbury had 17 and 17 assists for Minnesota, which remained tied with Phoenix for sixth place in the West at 40-41.

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NORTH		EAST	
1♠	Q 8 2	♠ K 8	
2♣	Q 7 2	♥ 9 6 5 4	
3♦	A 3 2	♦ 7	
4♥	A 4 4	♣ J 10 8 7 3	
WEST			
♠ 9 8 4			
♥ 10 8 3			
♦ 9 8			
♣ K 5 2			
SOUTH		WEST	
1♠	A 10 7 3	♠ 10 7 3	
2♣	A 3	♥ 10 8 3	
3♦	Q 10 6 5 4	♦ 9 8	
4♥	4 6	♣ K 5 2	

The bidding:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1♠ Pass 2NT Pass

3♦ Pass 3NT Pass

4♥ Pass 5NT Pass

6♥ Pass

Opening lead: Two of ♠

The team of Richard Freeman,

Nick Middel, Bob Hamman, Bobby

Wolf, Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meek-

stroth came from behind to win the

Springfield Knockout Team event at

the recent Summer North American

Championship, their third in a

row in this contest. The latter four

have certainly been the two out-

standing pairs in the country for

some 20 years, and Freeman and

Nickell have developed into a duo

that more than holds its own. To

win a national knockout team

championship is no mean feat. To "three-peat" is rare indeed, especially these days when even lower-ranked teams are capable of a major upset.

That is not something that can be accomplished without a fair amount of luck, and Bob Hamman was the recipient of a stroke of fortune on this deal from a preliminary round. Hamman and Wolff employ a system where the shorter suit routinely is bid first — a method known as Canape, devised almost a half-century ago in France. Wolff's two no trump was a game force, and Hamman showed his longer suit.

When Hamman stressed diamonds, Wolff leaped to five no trump, telling partner to choose a slam. Hamman went for all the marbles by bidding a grand slam in diamonds.

West led a low club, and Hamman was not entirely thrilled with the contract. Whether he counted up, down or sideways, there were only 12 fast tricks available, and squeeze chances were almost nonexistent. After considerable thought, Hamman shrugged and took the club finesse — making 13 tricks!

The team won 17 International Match Points. Had the finesse been wrong, the loss would have been 12 IMPs. The swing was 22 IMPs, and the Freeman team won the match by just 28!

Libya dismantles border refugee camps, transfers Palestinians to Tobruk by force

SALLOUM (AFP) — Libyan soldiers on Saturday dismantled a desert camp on the border with Egypt after the surprise evacuation of 250 Palestinians refugees who had been trapped there since 1995.

Witnesses, quoted by the French human rights group Doctors Without Borders (DWB), said armed Libyan soldiers came at dawn Friday dragging the refugees out of bed and ordering them to get into buses which left for Libya.

The evacuation took place on the second day of 'Eid Al Adha, the Muslim feast of sacrifice.

"The Palestinians refused to go so the Libyan soldiers shoved them and hit some with their rifles," one witness said.

DWB's Eric Stobbaerts, Cairo's regional chief, said from the Salloom border post that Libyans were using bulldozers Saturday to tear down the last tents.

An AFP correspondent at the scene said the soldiers worked into the night piling up tents, personal belongings and foodstuffs into trucks and were still tearing down five tents Saturday morning.

"The place is swamped with snakes and scorpions who had built nests under the camp," the correspondent said.

Egyptian security sources at the border confirmed late Friday the evacuation and said the Palestinians were taken to the Libyan town of Tobruk and put up in apartments.

Egyptian security sources monitored the dismantling of the camp from their side of the border with one of them saying: "This is their camp. We can do nothing about it."

The spokesman for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo con-



Two Palestinian children flash the victory sign at their makeshift camp in no-man's land on the Egyptian-Libyan border January 22 (AFP file photo)

firmed the evacuation and expressed relief at the removal of the Palestinians from the insalubrious camp.

"The dismantling of the camp was the only possible solution. We are very happy for the women and the children who are no longer living on the border in hardship conditions," said UNHCR spokesman Panos Moutziz.

More than 70 children lived in the camp and were deprived of school for more than two years and at least three babies were born there.

Mr. Moutziz deplored the use of force to dislodge the refugees and said the UNHCR mission in Tripoli will follow up the situation with the Libyan authorities.

"Our delegation in Tripoli will follow up the situation with the Libyan authorities as agreed in discussions initiated several months ago and as early as last week," he said.

Mr. Stobbaerts said DWB was concerned about the

health of five people, including a three-year-old "hermaphrodite boy who needs to undergo surgery abroad."

There was no immediate statement from Tripoli but Libyan security sources, quoted by travellers arriving in Egypt, said the Palestinians were becoming a "threat" to Libya and Egypt's security.

"Many were trafficking in drugs and contraband," said one Libyan source.

Twenty-one people of various nationalities, including Nigerian, who were also living in the camp were rounded up and taken to Libya and their fate will be discussed by Egypt and Libya next week, an Egyptian security source said.

The Palestinian delegate at the Cairo-based Arab League, Mohammad Sobehi, hoped Libya would reserve a warm welcome for the refugees.

"I hope that our brothers in Libya will provide their

Palestinian brothers with the best care possible... until their return to their homeland," Mr. Sobehi told AFP in Cairo on Friday.

Libya set up the camp in 1995 after Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi ordered the expulsion of 30,000 Palestinians from his country to prove the "failure" of the autonomy accords with Israel.

Their work contracts were severed and they were driven from their homes, leaving behind personal effects which were confiscated or looted.

Libya sent a Palestinian delegation to the camp in January to persuade the refugees to return but they refused, demanding guarantees that they will get back their jobs as well as property seized after their expulsion.

Egypt has refused to take the refugees in because they did not have proper papers or held travel documents which had expired.

Tehran's world relations back on track gradually but surely

Combined agency dispatches

IRAN ON Saturday voiced pleasure at the return here of Australia's and New Zealand's ambassadors shortly after they were recalled over terrorism charges against Tehran.

"We consider it as a positive step," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi, quoted by Iran's official IRNA news agency. "These two countries showed that they separate their interests from rumours and a U.S.-Israeli plot."

The two Pacific countries joined a European backlash against Iran and recalled their ambassadors after a German court accused Tehran of involvement in the 1992 murder of four Kurdish dissidents in Berlin.

Iran hit back by announcing it had imposed a trade ban on New Zealand and cancelled a visit here by an Australian economic delegation. The disputes were later resolved.

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette was quoted as saying on Friday that European Union (EU) nations will soon send back ambassadors to Tehran after they were recalled in a row over political slayings in Europe.

"I hope we will resolve this crisis," Mr. De Charette told Al Hayat newspaper, adding that the withdrawal of ambassadors was a sign of EU solidarity and of

Franco-German friendship. EU nations, except Greece, withdrew their ambassadors from Iran last week.

Asked if the envoys would soon return to Tehran, Mr. De Charette told the London-based Al Hayat: "Of course. The ambassadors will return to Iran after the consultations for which they have been recalled."

"It must be clear to the Iranian authorities that no European country is ready to accept the idea of Iranian interference in the domestic life of our countries," Mr. De Charette said.

But he also praised Iran and its ancient civilisation, and said: "We hope to have with both the country, its people and its leaders a dialogue that will benefit all sides... Our goal is to have normal state-to-state relations with Iran."

Kazakhstan said Saturday it would give a "new impetus" to relations with Iran following a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.

"Kazakhstan considers Iran one of its most important regional partners," the Kazakh Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We are ready to make every necessary effort to give a new impetus to our relations."

Trade between the two countries remains limited, but rose to around \$62 million in 1996.

Mr. Velayati, who ended the two-day visit Friday, said in an interview broad-

cast Saturday by Kazakh television that "Kazakhstan and Iran can play a very important role in guaranteeing peace and stability in the region."

Mr. Velayati said that he and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev had discussed ways of ending the conflicts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

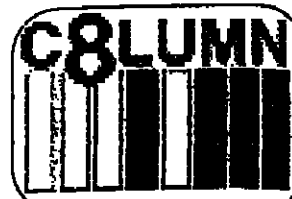
The visit was also aimed at boosting Iranian imports of Kazakh oil. Kazakhstan has delivered 70,000 tonnes of crude to Iran since the start of the year. However, supplies were interrupted two weeks ago because Kazakh oil has a very high mercaptan content, which Iranian refineries are not able to process.

Official Kazakh sources said the country was expected to export around six million tonnes of oil annually to Iran over the next few years.

Mr. Velayati also said that "differences will be resolved very quickly" over the legal status of the Caspian Sea, on which both countries border.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran has found itself sharing the Caspian with four countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

Kazakhstan is in favour of a division of the sea-bed into national economic exploitation zones. Tehran wants oil reserves to be exploited jointly by companies in which each state has an interest.



Hoffman sues over silk dress

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Dustin Hoffman was a box office smash as the cross-dressing actor in "Tootsie," but he saw red when Los Angeles magazine ran a computer-simulated photograph of him in a Richard Tyler silk dress. Hoffman is suing the magazine for \$5 million in damages because he was "converted into an involuntary clothing model without pay and, of course, without his consent or even his knowledge," according to court documents.

Supermodel Claudia Schiffer dreams of being cloned

LIMA (R) — German supermodel Claudia Schiffer shared a dream on Friday that might delight many of her male admirers: she would love to be cloned. "I'd love to have two (clones) so that I could have more time for myself," Schiffer told a news conference in Lima. Schiffer is in Peru to promote a local credit card and take part in a fashion show. The famous blonde, who visited Colombia last year, said she and fellow supermodels Christy Turlington, Elle Macpherson and Naomi Campbell hoped to open a branch of their fashion cafe chain in Latin America shortly. "We are studying the main Latin American cities and it is very likely that by the end of July we will have opened one in Mexico," she said.

Renoir painting drops \$28 million in value

NEW YORK (AFP) — A Renoir portrait titled "Le Moulin de la Galette," the second-most valuable painting in the world in 1990 when it sold for \$73.1 million, dropped to \$30 million in a recent sale. The Wall Street Journal reported Friday. Japanese paper magnate Ryoei Saito bought the painting at a May 1990 Sotheby's auction, which brought in \$287 million, a record which has never been broken. At the time, Saito was so entranced with his new purchase that he said he intended to be buried with it.

Cruise stars in Kubrick film

NEW YORK (AP) — Tom Cruise won't say exactly what he's doing in Stanley Kubrick's new psychological thriller "Eyes Wide Shut" — but he's not wearing a dress. "I've read a lot of stuff. No one's gotten it right. They're reaching," Cruise told the New York Daily News when asked if Kubrick had him dress in women's clothing for the film. The actor and his real-life wife, Nicole Kidman, play out a variety of sexual fantasies in the film, currently in production in England. He admitted that "it can be grueling" working with Kubrick, the director of "Dr. Strangelove" and "A Clockwork Orange." "He rehearses, we work on the scene, then he rewrites again," said Cruise, nominated for an Oscar this year for "Jerry Maguire." But, he said, "as an actor, you have to support the director. It's his vision."

Model gives dating advice

NEW YORK (AP) — Supermodel Tyra Banks is through dating celebrities — and model gossips. "When you date a modeler, you get insecure because you don't want them to see you not looking like a model," Banks said in the May issue of details magazine. Banks, who has been paired with singer Seal and director John Singleton, said she would much rather date a normal guy who's not famous. But what's the best way to treat a model-girlfriend? "Don't tell her that she's beautiful when you see her at work, because then she thinks you're talking to the model," Banks said. "Tell her when she comes out of the shower."

Lebanese Shiites fight; Arabs remember Cana

CANA (R) — Hundreds of rival Lebanese Shiites marked commemorations on Friday of the Israeli massacre of civilians in Cana, south Lebanon by fighting each other with fists and sticks outside the cemetery.

Witnesses said fighting erupted between supporters of Hizbollah (party of God) and Amal, Lebanon's mainstream pro-Syrian Shiite movement, when hundreds of Hizbollah militants marched on the cemetery crowded with Amal supporters.

Fighting continued for 10-15 minutes at the gates of the cemetery, witnesses said. They saw several young men with blood pouring from head wounds. Fijian U.N. peace-keeping troops at their base beside the cemetery said at least one Hizbollah supporter was hurt.

Earlier, black-clad relatives of the dead paid silent tribute at the cemetery as Lebanon marked the first anniversary of the "massacre at Cana" in which Israeli artillery shells killed 100 refugees at the Fijian base.

Thirteen high explosive shells rained on the camp in 12 minutes, hitting two wooden shelters crowded with refugees instantly killing most of the people inside them.

More than 800 refugees lived in the camp and an official U.N. investigator reported that the shelling was unlikely to have been the result of an error by the Israeli gunners.

Israel claimed the shelling was a mistake.

Crowds flocked on Friday to pay their respects at the cemetery that has become a national shrine to the April 18, 1996, killings, the worst atrocity of Israel's 17-day "Grapes of Wrath" blitz on Lebanon.

Up to 200 people, mainly civilians, were killed throughout the Israeli raid that forced up to 400,000 people to flee south Lebanon and caused damage estimated at \$500 million.

Israel said the bombardment — launched by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres during an election campaign — was intended to destroy Hizbollah,



The Lebanese light candles in remembrance of the Cana massacre of 100 men, women and children who were massacred by Israel while being sheltered by the U.N. (AFP photo)

whose guerrillas were attacking Israeli troops in south Lebanon and had fired salvos of Katyusha rockets at Jewish settlements in northern Israel.

However, Hizbollah emerged almost unscathed as Israel bombed civilian targets right up to the capital Beirut.

In a sign of national solidarity for the victims on Thursday night, candles flickered in Beirut on street corners, at monuments and in windows in commemoration of the dead.

Speakers at an official commemoration on Friday in the southern city of Tyre a few kilometres from Cana warned that Lebanon would fight until Israeli troops left the country.

Addressing several thousand people at Tyre's Roman hippodrome, Shiite parliament speaker Nabih Berri, the leader of Amal, said Israel could be preparing "new seasons of bloodshed."

"Will we witness a new chapter of Israel's state terrorism and where will the next massacre take place?" Mr. Berri asked.

He attacked the United States, saying: "The continuation of the U.S. policy of arming Israel and placing it above

the international community's control... will lead to the destruction of all peace settlement efforts."

At Cana, 1,000 Hizbollah fighters lined the road near the cemetery with a huge banner that read: "Only the weak collapse after massacres. We become stronger."

Inside the cemetery, black-clad mourners sat on the marble tombstones.

"My sorrow is intensifying and the wound is growing deeper every day," said 34-year-old Fatima Fatoumi whose brother died in the Israeli shelling.

Photographs of entire families killed in the massacre hung from the cemetery wall, but some could not bear to look at them.

"When I come here I sit by my friend's grave but I never look at the pictures," said 11-year-old Youssef Yassine. "I want to remember him as a complete child, not pieces of flesh."

"Life has changed so much in this area. We don't have feasts any more. Only memories of our dead relatives," said Tahira Balhas, 40, watching the mourners from her balcony overlooking the cemetery.

Kurdish factions to free captives

WASHINGTON (R) — Rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq agreed to release 131 prisoners at a meeting in Turkey this week, the U.S. State Department said on Friday. Spokesman Nicholas Burns said that at Wednesday's meeting in Ankara, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) agreed to release 61 detainees from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), while the PUK agreed to free 70 KDP detainees.

The agreement came at a regular meeting of the so-called supervisory peace monitoring group, which includes U.S., British and Turkish officials and representatives of the KDP, PUK and Turkoman and Assyrian minorities in northern Iraq.

The group was set up after fighting between the two factions last year in northern Iraq, which has been under Western protection since shortly after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf war.

The KDP invited Iraqi troops into the enclave last August to help battle its rivals. Fighting continued until the United States arranged a ceasefire in October.

"We congratulate the KDP and the PUK on this agreement to release prisoners," Mr. Burns told reporters. "We hope that it's the beginning of an effort to make more progress on some of the other issues that have divided them, and we look forward to further meetings of this group."

Points at issue between the two groups include sharing of oil trade revenues on the Turkish border and the status of the city of Erbil.

Mideast crisis shadowed Euro-Med cooperation

VALLETA (R) — The European Union (EU) wanted the Malta conference with its Mediterranean partners to deepen ties, but diplomats and analysts say it will be remembered only for a single political gesture.

The second Euro-Med conference which ended on Wednesday after assembling foreign ministers from the 15 EU states and 12 Mediterranean delegations scored a coup by bringing Israeli and Palestinian leaders face-to-face for the first time in weeks.

This overshadowed the so-called Barcelona process, a \$6.4 billion programme launched in Spain in November 1995 that is supposed to showcase political, economic and cultural links between the two regions.

Maltese Prime Minister Alfred Sant admitted as much in closing remarks to the conference when he added his criticism to the many who had already bemoaned the slow pace of the programme.

"(The Middle East breakthrough) might have led some to believe that progress in the political and security chapter was overtaking progress in the economic and finance and in the social, cultural and human chapter," he said.

The Malta conference correctly redressed this balance — though unfortunately indirectly by slowing

down the first chapter.

Mediterranean countries have criticised the pace of the programme in the past, and Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo — who chaired the conference on behalf of the EU's Netherlands presidency — had to endure a string of complaints from his colleagues.

In the end he resorted to a familiar EU tactic to deflect criticism — blaming the European Commission.

Asked what could be done to speed allocation of funds for hundreds of projects from water purification schemes to road-building, he said: "Really this is a question for the commission and for (European commissioner Manuel) Marin."

But Mr. Marin, who has responsibility for the Mediterranean region, also resorted to that familiar tactic — he blamed the EU's member states.

He urged the Mediterranean countries to be patient, explaining that although the commission wanted to press ahead with projects, many had to be approved by individual member states before they could proceed.

Mr. Marin's spokesman Josep Coll i Carbo was at pains to explain to journalists during the conference that behind the scenes, work was proceeding on the practical aspects of the partner-

ship.

"I know it seems that the whole thing is about the Middle East but look at Jordan, look at Egypt," he told Reuters.

He was referring to Jordan's initialing of an association agreement with the EU that promises lucrative trade and other privileges and discussions with Egypt on a bilateral treaty.

The Barcelona process was conceived to reassure Mediterranean countries that the EU's interests did not lie solely in eastern Europe, but it is hard to find anyone who believes it has succeeded.

"Our partners see how much the EU is investing in eastern Europe and how much in the Mediterranean and they draw their conclusions," one diplomat said. "But in reality, countries like Poland and Hungary... their attractiveness for Europe cannot be compared to Mauritania and Libya."

His choice of the latter two was not arbitrary. Many Arab delegations appealed for Mauritania — which is not in Europe or on the Mediterranean — to be included in Euro-Med, while others said it was time to reassess Libya's political and economic isolation.

Another European diplomat warned, however: "If they think things are slow now, wait till they see what happens if this group gets any bigger."

Uganda's army kill 60 Sudanese troops

KAMPALA (R) — Uganda said on Friday its army killed 60 Sudanese soldiers and captured more than 100 just inside Uganda, beating back a joint attack on Monday by the Sudanese army and Ugandan rebels.

Minister of State for Defence Amama Mbabazi in a statement published by the state-owned new vision daily denied a report from Sudan's state radio that 306 Ugandan soldiers were killed the same day in a battle south of the southern Sudanese city, Juba.

He said Uganda's army on Monday repulsed an attack by Sudanese troops and Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels at Lelabur just inside the northern Ugandan side of the border with south Sudan. "Sixty Sudanese armed forces were killed and 114 captured. The captives are in the custody of the fourth division in northern Uganda. Sixty-eight LRA bandits were killed and 50 were either captured or surrendered," he added.

He gave no Ugandan army casualties, except to say that two members of a special army unit tracking LRA leader Joseph Kony in south Sudan were missing and it was unclear if they were killed or captured.

In his statement he denied a report on Sudan's radio on Thursday quoting Sudan's army as saying 306 Ugandan soldiers were killed on Monday in a battle 70 kilometres south of Juba as they attempted to attack the capital of southern Sudan.

"On April 14 the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) attacked a combined force of about two companies of Sudan forces and two companies of Kony bandits near Lelabur just inside the Uganda-Sudan border," Mr. Mbabazi said.

"This combined force had the intention of establishing a base in Gulu or Kitgum (in Uganda) for purposes of carrying out intelligence work in preparation for an offensive by the Sudanese armed forces and Kony bandits in northern Uganda."

"The full names and particulars of especially the captives will be availed to the public in due course," he added. An Ugandan army spokesman said on Friday he had nothing to add to the statement.

Mr. Mbabazi said the Ugandan army captured an assortment of arms and the Sudanese and Ugandan captives were being held in Gulu.